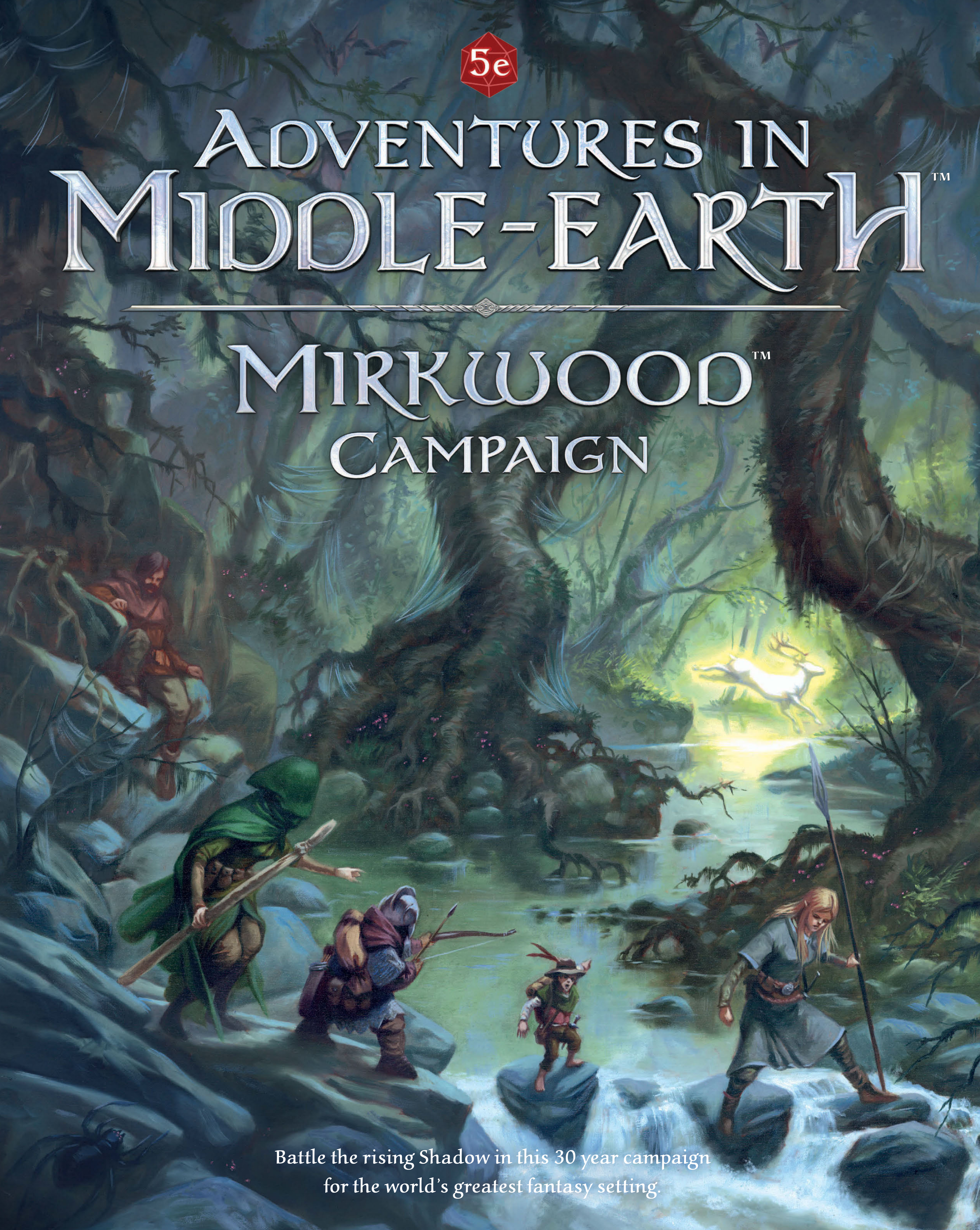
ADVENTURES IN MIDDLE-EARTH™

MIRKWOOD™ CAMPAIGN



Battle the rising Shadow in this 30 year campaign
for the world's greatest fantasy setting.

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- the mirkwood - campaign

Under the boughs of Mirkwood there was deadly strife of Elves and Men and fell beasts.

In the year 2951, Sauron sent the Ringwraiths to reclaim his dark hold of Dol Guldur in yet another chapter in the struggle between darkness and light for control of Mirkwood.

In the following decades, Sauron succeeded in making Dol Guldur the starting point for large-scale attacks against Lórien and the Woodland Realm. Even though the Free Peoples were ultimately victorious, many lost their lives and Wilderland at large suffered greatly.

The *Mirkwood Campaign* places the heroes in the middle of that coming war, alongside those who fight the shadow that threatens to engulf the forest and subjugate all those who live near and inside it.

Can the heroes change what has been written? Will they succeed in weakening the power in Dol Guldur and protecting the folks that live in the forest? Or will they fail and worsen their fate?

Loremasters should note that the *Rhovanion Region Guide* is necessary to provide many of the non-player characters and adversaries faced in the Campaign.

The Campaign Outline

The campaign is divided into five major sections, each spanning several years as the battle between the Free Peoples and the Shadow takes new forms. The first section is *The Last Good Years* — a brief respite before *The Return of the Shadow. The Gathering Gloom* brings *The Years of the Plague* and then the assault of the Enemy begins in earnest in *The Darkening of Mirkwood.* Two additional rules sections are provided — the Loremaster will learn the deadly secrets of *The Nazgûl of Dol Guldur* and the player-heros may be visited by *Shadows in the Forest.*

All told, the Campaign spans between 2947 (the first hints of the returning shadow) to 2977 (the death of King Bard). For each year, the following format is used:

Events

Here are listed a number of noteworthy things that happen in Mirkwood and the lands immediately surrounding it.

Sometimes, events that occur far from the forest, either on the edge of the Wild or in civilised lands to the South, are also featured. The companions may or may not hear tell of such things, depending on circumstances.

You, as Loremaster, can use the information contained in this section in any way you see fit, as plot hooks to be developed in additional adventures, to add depth and perspective to the deeds of the Player-heroes during an Adventuring phase or to keep the Company up to date with the passing news of major events affecting the land during a Fellowship phase.

Adventuring Phase

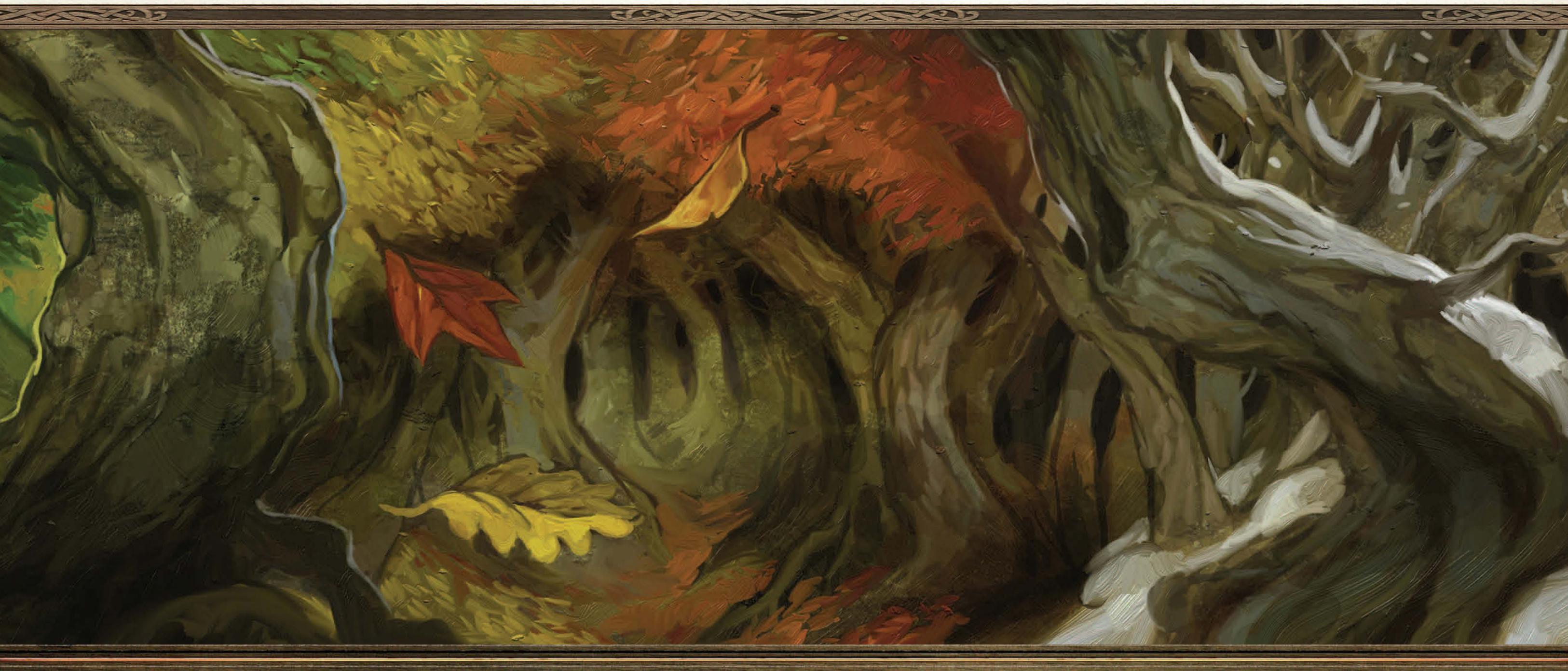
This section typically contains one sample adventure for the company to embark upon. A measure of customisation is required, especially as the actual play campaign progresses and the actions of the Player-heroes affect and alter the history of Wilderland.

Loremasters are strongly encouraged to modify the plot elements or change the location of a sample adventure, or even to substitute key characters to adapt the adventures to their playing groups. The aim of this section is to provide a strong foundation to build upon, not to impose a rigid plot on your game (see also *Using the Campaign* and *Personal Stakes* below).

News from Afar

Outside of the Shire, there is no postal service in Middle-earth, and certainly no newspapers. And while it seems that Elves can spread or gather information "as quick as water flows, or quicker", they rarely share what they know with other folks. More often than not, tidings go far and wide only through the gossip of wandering merchants and in the close-mouthed grumblings of travelling Dwarves, and may even become difficult to separate from wild tales and distorted rumours.

Without the intervention of envoys or messengers, it might take one full year, sometimes more, for characters in Wilderland to learn of events happening elsewhere in the region, and from 2 to 5 years for news from outside Wilderland to reach them, and at least 3 to 8 years for news out of the South, East or West. Characters proficient with Lore may be able to get news faster, or have access to better sources. Furthermore, many powerful individuals either have their own networks of informants and messengers, or else have some way of getting information quickly. Radagast, for example, has his flocks of birds; Beorn has his animals and can travel swiftly by night – but even a Wizard must go in search of rumours and news. In Middle-earth, miles are miles, and someone has to cross them to bring word from afar.



YEAR'S END

You may have one or more Fellowship phases each year, depending on how you structure your Campaign. In this section, you will find entries for undertakings, along with hints at adventures that can follow up on the events of the provided Adventuring phase. Some of the later years may not offer a specific entry, as it becomes more and more difficult to foresee what the companions might do in their spare time.

Loremasters should remember that the last Fellowship phase of a given year is an excellent time to relate the occurrences of previous Events section, so that players feel the history of Middle-earth unfold before them.

THE CAMPAIGN GOAL

Should the *Mirkwood Campaign* become the story told in *The Lord of the Rings* and its appendices, it will be the telling of a long defeat for the Free People of the North. The Shadow returns to the forest, and Dol Guldur is restored. By the time of the War of the Ring, Mirkwood is again a place of horror. The Woodmen are barely mentioned and may be scattered or destroyed, Beorn is dead, Radagast gone and the Woodland Realm is isolated.

Even heroes can hardly avert this fate — all the odds are against them. But there is something they can certainly do: they can fight to hold back the darkness for another day, another month, maybe another year. Their plight may be considered desperate, even hopeless, but they will at least save something from the inevitable doom.

For these reasons, the emphasis of the *Mirkwood Campaign* should be on personal tragedy. The forest may be lost, but can the heroes save their own families and friends from slavery and death? Can they preserve the treasures kept by the Woodmen? Can they salvage something from the ruin? They may not live to see the downfall of the Enemy, but they can save the North from his malice and give hope to the future.

USING THE CAMPAIGN

Among other things, the *Adventures in Middle-earth Loremaster's Guide* elaborates why players should not be intimidated by what some recognise as a ‘Tolkien canon‘ (pages 48 and 49). They should not feel limited by the Campaign offered in this guide either, and for very similar reasons: Middle-earth historians can be wrong, rumours are often mistaken for truth and what is written may not be what actually came to pass.

When considering the events described in this guide for inclusion in their own game, Loremasters are encouraged to customise the facts and adventures presented herein, to the point of altering or discarding them altogether, to replace with new ones of their own devising.

This guide is filled with plot elements that are meant to be woven together with the deeds of the players, not a rigid script for them to play through.

Not everything contained here will suit every group, and you should not attempt to have your players witness or take part in every single occurrence described. If the year's main' events are in Southern Mirkwood, and the players are currently in the Woodland Realm, there is no need to force them to travel the length of Mirkwood – either run another adventure, or let them simply hear later about what transpired.

PERSONAL STAKES

The campaign works best if the players have a stake in Mirkwood. Ideally, most of the heroes come from the Free Folk who live in or around the forest – either Woodmen, Silvan Elves or Beornings. Characters from foreign cultures should be given a personal reason to care about what happens to the forest and to keep them close to the action.

The companions are the heroes of the campaign. That does not mean they must be stronger than Beorn or wiser than Radagast, nor does it mean that Loremaster characters do not have weight – it means that every game session should be about what the heroes do, about their part in the fight against the Enemy. If Beorn defeats an army of Goblins, it should be the epic consequence of the player-heroes' infiltration into the caves under the Mountains of Mirkwood to find the lost Sceptre of Oropher.

Holdings

The rules for creating and running a holding (page 9) give the players something of their own to build and protect. They make a character part of the setting – and they are wonderful leverage for the Loremaster to use. If Spiders attack a Woodman village, that's a tragedy for the heroes to avenge – but if the village includes a farm that is part of a hero's holding, then it's personal.

Moreover, holdings may put heroes in a difficult position where they are forced to choose between their own interests and the common good: what will a hero choose when faced with the option of remaining faithful to an important quest, or return home to protect his own?

Kin & Hearth

When Bilbo Baggins went There and Back Again, the worst he had to contend with at home was the Sackville-Bagginses stealing his spoons. Frodo went to Mordor and returned to find the Shire wounded, but he still left a place of comfort and safety to travel far into danger. Most of the heroes of the *Mirkwood Campaign* do not have the same luxury. For heroes native to Wilderland, danger is not over the Misty Mountains and far away – it is right outside their door. What is threatened by the growing Shadow are their homes and their way of life.

When it is the case, the Loremaster should encourage the players to describe where they live, who are the important personalities of their folk and which stories are told in their home culture.

Over the course of the campaign, the players should be offered the chance to become leaders in their communities, marry and have children, make friends and allies. Then, with a kin and a hearth to defend, it will be easy for the Loremaster to threaten all they stand for.

Personal threats can take many forms in the Campaign. Orcs come down from the mountains to raid villages, Spiders lurk in the shadows, and the dead walk in the woods. Then, there are subtler threats, but no less dangerous; a dark power corrupts and rots all that is good and wholesome, sowing dissent among the Woodman clans, the Elves turn their backs on the world, and once-trusted allies fall prey to fear, despair or even turn to the Shadow.

As Mirkwood grows darker, the heroes should see the world becoming more hostile and perilous with each passing year.

Customising the Adventures

The plot elements described in the Adventuring Phase entries are not detailed as other published adventures (and become more and more so as the Campaign progresses). Loremasters should look at them as starting points and suggestions, to be customised around their playing groups.

Where possible, the Loremaster should link the events of the adventure directly to the companions. If an adventure mentions a kidnap victim, it should be one of the companions' kin or friends. If an adventure has a villain, it should be replaced with a recurring foe that the players really hate!

The Passing Years

The *Mirkwood Campaign* spans thirty years, longer than the time most heroes spend adventuring. From the start of the campaign, players should have one eye on the future. Bardings, Beornings, Woodmen and even Hobbit heroes are encouraged to get married, settle down, have children, and eventually hand over their weapons to their sons and daughters. See *Experience Awards*, below, for more information on how to handle new heroes joining the Campaign. Dwarves and Elves should set their aim on similarly-termed goals, such as the foundation of a settlement, the hoarding of treasure, the recovery of a long-lost heirloom, all for the greater glory of their folk or to pass along to a worthy heir.

During play, the Loremaster can remind the players of the unfolding of time in more effective ways than just listing the passing of year after year. New villages get founded, grow, and then disappear, victim to Orcs or plague or some other disaster. Loremaster characters enter the heroes' lives, then disappear and are forgotten, or age and die; villains start off as strong young warriors and end as aged tyrants. Mirkwood is a living forest, and sometimes nothing more than describing yet another turn of the colour of its leaves or the first snowfall is needed to summon the feeling of time flowing ever on.

Light & Dark

A very simple metaphor runs through the entire Campaign – light and darkness are equated with good and evil. Dark places are bad, dangerous and home to evil things; sunshine, open fires and blazing lamps are good. A brightly lit place is a safe haven. The Loremaster would do good to play up this symbolism – hope should be kindled with flaming torches, dark times be announced by the coming of black clouds, the company should meet allies in sunlit clearings, and face down foes in the shadows below the trees. This balance of light and darkness can also be used to mark the current state of things in Mirkwood. If, by the company's actions, the Elves of Mirkwood become more insular and wayward, then the halls of King Thranduil may be described as lit by flickering candles and full of ghostly shadows. If, conversely, the companions rally the Elves and bring hope to the forest, then their sanctuaries blaze with the glare of magical lamps, reflected off the rocky ceilings like a heaven of shining stars above. Absolute despair comes with absolute darkness.

Experience Awards

Throughout this volume you'll see symbols in the margin. These indicate a chance for the Loremaster to award Experience Points for overcoming challenges. These opportunities are optional, to be made at the Loremaster's discretion and in accordance with the method of levelling they have chosen. They might form a direct, numerical award, or a silently observed instance that counts towards gaining a whole level if enough are checked off. Every game will vary, but these Experience Awards have been calculated to offer a good chance for a typical Company to level up in accordance with the pace we suggest for the Campaign.

The *Mirkwood Campaign* makes use of the Companion and Challenge Rating Experience Award Table (provided below) for non-combat encounters. Just as a combat encounter should be scaled to reflect the size of your company, so too should these Awards be scaled to match your group of adventurers.

The symbols in red represent an individual achievement and are awarded to a single hero. Those in green are intended to be divided amongst the party. Experience derived from battle is calculated according to the core rules – for the sake of simplicity and consistency there is no change there.

Three especial notes must be made for a campaign of this length — firstly, it's expected that new player-heroes will join the Company as older heroes succumb to the Shadow, fall in battle or retire to a well-earned life of peace. Newer heroes should receive an equal part of the Experience Awards… even if they stayed at the battle's edge or were silent in the chambers of the high and mighty, they surely learned from their elders and will be even more ready for the challenges of the future. Awarding a full share of the XP for a higher level challenge will allow new companions to join the ranks of veteran heroes that much sooner.

Secondly, Experience Awards are provided for sections of the Campaign where a few lines might sketch out the contents of an entire gaming session. This is especially true of Year's End entries, which sometimes contain the seed of a follow-up adventure. The Loremaster should use the Award rating in this case to provide a 'budget' for adversaries that the Company will face or as a gauge for the difficulty of their assignment. Earning these awards is factored into the progression of the Campaign, so if you don't run a follow-on adventure, the award might instead represent the many challenges of ordinary life in the Wild.

Thirdly, the first section of the Campaign — *The Last Good Years* is flexible on level ranges. It is assumed that the Company will garner additional Experience (perhaps by playing through part or all of *Wilderland Adventures* or using the suggested Events and Year's End entries to produce additional adventures). As long as the heroes begin *The Return of the Shadow* at 5th level they will be on schedule to reach 15th level by the end of the Campaign.

Challenge	XP	Challenge	XP
2	450	9	5,000
3	750	10	5,900
4	1,100	11	7,200
5	1,800	12	8,400
6	2,300	13	10,000
7	2,900	14	11,500
8	3,900	15	13,000

Individual Award 🟥 🟩 **Group Award**

Rules for Holdings

'He lives in an oakwood and has a great wooden house; and as a man he keeps cattle and horses...'

Over the course of the campaign, heroes may come into possession of a holding. A holding might be a business, like a smithy or a tavern. It might be a farm, or the companion might own land that is tilled by peasants who rent the land and give the character a portion of each harvest. Holdings do not need to be limited to strictly physical possessions – a Woodman's home and family might together constitute a holding.

A holding represents the hero's main occupation when they are not adventuring. Bag End might be considered part of a holding belonging to Bilbo Baggins (and later, Frodo); Sam's gardening job there would also be a holding (of less value). Not every adventurer has a holding; a truant Hobbit far from the Shire or a merry Elf might not have any responsibilities or commitments.

Gaining a Holding

There are many ways for a hero to come into possession of a holding. For example, a lucky hero might inherit a holding from a wealthy family member. Typically, a companion gains a holding as the result of an adventure, perhaps as a gift, or maybe by finding an unoccupied holding and taking possession of it. Acquiring a holding might be the subject of an Adventuring phase or heroes can use the *Tend to Holding* undertaking (see below) to lay the foundations of a holding if they have established a suitable location.

Rating	Description	Examples
+0	Poor	New or abandoned farmstead, disused building
+1	Modest	Trapper's cabin; small or poorly kept farm
+2	Adequate	Farmstead; homely cottage; small yet well-stocked shop
+3	Respectable	Small inn; large farm; homes of the well-to-do
+4	Superior	Rich hunting grounds; large inn; popular shop
+5	Thriving	Iron mine; minor noble's estate; the fanciest shops of Dale and Esgaroth
+6	Opulent	Gold or silver mine; major noble's estate

Rating

The table above gives Ratings for holdings and some examples of sample holdings that might have such a Rating. Players should remember that even the grandest estate of a noble was once a tract of untamed wilderness. Investment in both gold and time can increase a holding's Rating and bad luck or bad management can reduce the Rating of a holding. The Loremaster should work with each player to describe how a holding has changed as its rating fluctuates. Ratings can never go below +0 or above +6.

Specialities

A character who owns a holding may profit from having a matching Speciality – an innkeeper should learn *Cooking*, a Hunter *Beast-Lore* and so on (see *Holding Upkeep* below). See *Gain New Trait* on page 200 of the *Player's Guide*.

RUNNING A HOLDING

The mundane affairs of running a business – planting crops, mining ore, forging tools and so on – can be ignored in the game; it is assumed that the character has the requisite skills, or can employ someone who does. What is important to determine is how a holding may change over the course of the years, and what fruits does it bear.

Holding Upkeep

During a Fellowship phase that represents the end of a year, all players whose heroes have a holding must make a special check, called the Holding Upkeep check. The **DC** for the test is determined by the hero's Standard of Living, as producing a Frugal result from a holding is easier than a Prosperous one. A hero can voluntarily choose a higher Standard of Living, which they will benefit from until the next Holding Upkeep check.

STANDARD OF LIVING	HOLDING UPKEEP DC
Poor	10
Frugal	12
Martial	14
Prosperous	18
Rich	20

The player rolls a d20 and adds the hero's Proficiency Bonus and the holding's Rating. If it has been more than a year since the hero visited the holding then the Holding Upkeep check is made at Disadvantage. Note that heroes can spend a Fellowship phase at a holding and select other undertakings (such as Heal Corruption) instead of Tend to Holding.

If the hero spends Inspiration or possesses a relevant Trait (for example *Woodwright* for a barrel-maker's shop), they gain Advantage on the Holding Upkeep check. Compare the result to the following list:

- **Failure with a natural 1:** the holding suffers some disaster or misfortune. The hero must immediately pay a number of gold pieces equal to twice their holding's Rating. If not, the Rating of the holding is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of +0).

  Examples: a farm damaged by flooding, an inn attacked by raiders, a gold mine sapped from below by Goblins.

- **Failure with any other result:** the holding has struggled this year. The hero must pay equal to the holding's Rating in gold pieces in order to achieve their base Standard of Living. If the hero cannot pay the Upkeep cost, the Rating of the holding is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of +0).

- **Success with a natural 20:** the holding provides for the hero's Standard of Living and produces excess profit equal to twice the holding's Rating in gold pieces. If the hero elects to not receive the wealth in coin and invest it into the holding instead, the Rating of the holding is increased by one (to a maximum of +6). Furthermore, some auspicious event occurs.

  Examples: a sick child recovers, an old feud is settled, the weather is unusually pleasant and mild.

- **Success with any other result:** the holding has seen moderate success and produces enough profit to pay the hero's yearly Standard of Living expenses, plus gold pieces equal to the holding's Rating.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Tend to Holding

A character may spend a Fellowship phase undertaking to improve his holding. If he does so, he can then elect to spend gold pieces equal to thrice the holding's improved Rating (e.g. 3g to go from +0 to +1, 6g to +2, 9g to +3, and so on). The holding's Rating is then increased by 1 at the end of the Fellowship phase. A holding's Rating can never exceed +6.

A hero can select this undertaking after winning a potential holding during an Adventuring phase. After spending the undertaking in hard labour (but spending no coin), the hero now has a holding with a Rating of +0.

the last good years:
- 2947-2950 -

These are the last years before the return of the Shadow. The Woodmen multiply, but they must deal with the scattered minions of Dol Guldur. In the north, the Elves savour again the joy of living under the dark boughs of the forest, but are later troubled by the Werewolf of Mirkwood and quarrel with the folk of Dale.

- year 2947 -

for heroes of level 5 or lower

Events

Gollum passes through Mirkwood. The wretched creature crosses the Long Marshes just south of the Elf-path, then makes his way south-west, skirting away from any danger. In the autumn, he crosses into the Western Eaves, and survives by preying on the unwary and those who are too weak to defend themselves.

Ceawin the Generous (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 114) sends messengers to Woodmen-town, Rhosgobel and Woodland Hall, asking for the clan elders to hear his plea. He wants to ally his followers living in the East Bight with the Woodmen, his distant kin. The elders agree to hear his request, and a folk-moot is arranged for the midsummer of the following year at Rhosgobel.

The companions may meet these messengers, or be sent to the East Bight with the reply of the elders. After several years of peace, the howl of the Werewolf of Mirkwood is again heard in the forest. It attacks a party of Dwarves from Erebor after they foolishly stray from the Elf-path.

Adventuring Phase: The Wizard's Man

The heroes encounter a wounded man and are then threatened by the servants of Tyrant's Hill.

The Spy of Rhosgobel

While out hunting or travelling near Rhosgobel, the companions encounter a wounded man. He stumbles towards them, his face pale as a ghost, yellow-flecked spit welling up from the corners of his mouth. He was waylaid by Spiders in the woods, and their poison courses through his veins. He presses a crumpled note into the character's hands before becoming Unconscious.

Any Woodman companion hailing from Mirkwood (or anyone possessing the *Region-lore* (*Mirkwood*) trait) recognises him as Beran the Watchful; he is a Woodman,

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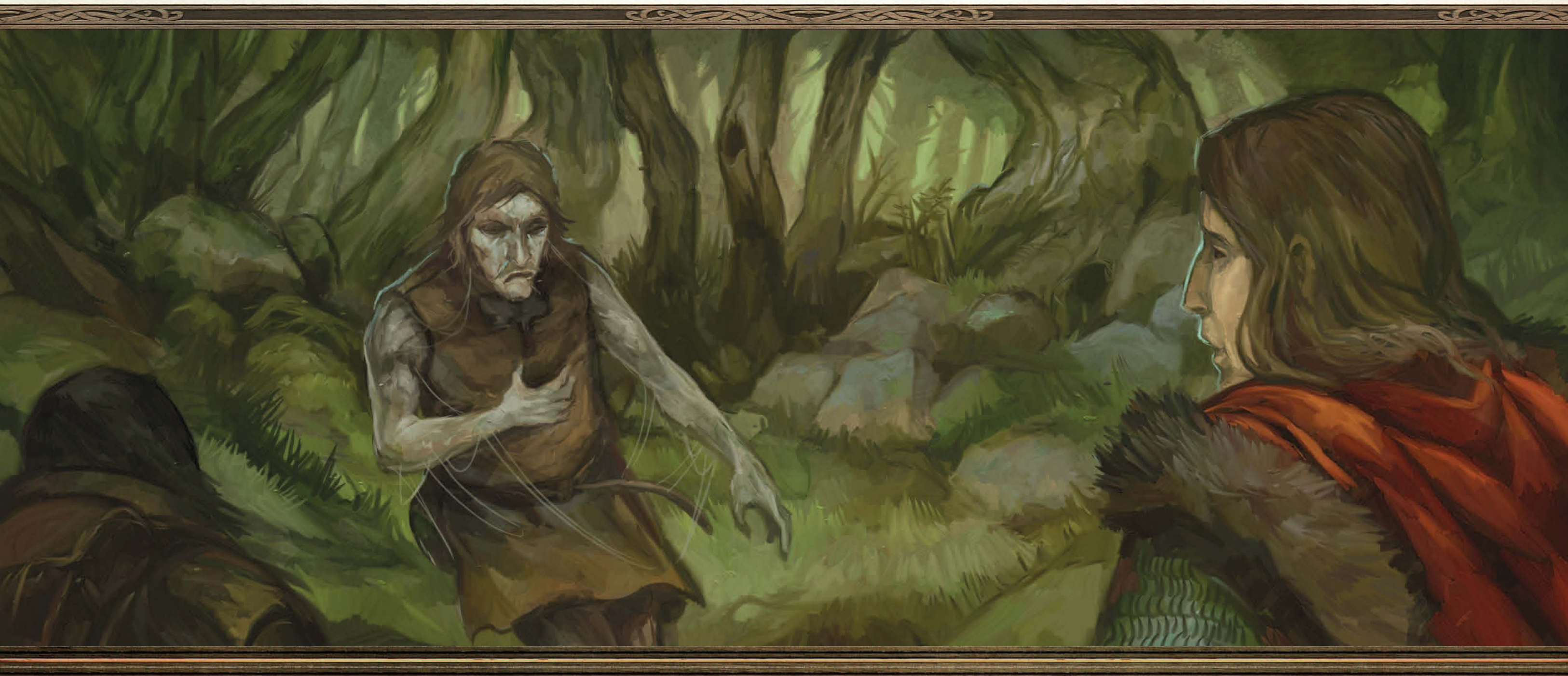


and is known as one of Radagast's informants and watchmen. The heroes can make a **DC 10 Intelligence** (**Investigation** or **Riddle**) check to decipher the note he carries. It warns that Beran saw Orcs in Fenbridge Castle, one of the outlying fortifications of Dol Guldur (see *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 120). A scrawled map notes the position of Fenbridge, and also marks a tower near the Narrows of the Forest (the Tyrant's Hill). The Enemy abandoned the castle after the White Council drove the Necromancer from Dol Guldur, but now the Orcs have returned.

3 The Hand of Mogdred

Soon after Beran meets the Company, a group of armed warriors emerge from the forest, accompanied by huge snarling wolfhounds. They are clad not unlike the Woodmen of Mirkwood, but do not bear the marks of any known clan. They wear mail shirts, and carry helms and shields on their back, but it is clear that they are not looking for a fight. There are as many Servants of Tyrant's Hill as there are heroes, and also the same number of Savage Hounds.

The leader of the group steps forward: she's a lean, broad-shouldered Northman woman, with dark hair streaked with white. She announces herself as Dagmar, a free huntress of the forest. Pointing at the poisoned man, she claims that Beran stole something from her, and arrogantly demands that he should be handed over to them. If questioned, Dagmar identifies herself as a follower of Mogdred, the Lord of the Tyrant's Hill. Her master, she tells them, claims the southern forest as his realm, and is a Woodman born of Mirkwood. She insists that they are friends to the Woodmen, but her demeanour says otherwise.

Dagmar is lying – she captured Beran in the woods, and forcibly escorted him to the Tyrant's Hill. Beran escaped but blundered into a Spider-web. Mogdred wants to keep news of the Orcs from the Woodmen for as long as possible, until he decides which side to support. If the companions point out the letter, Dagmar offers to bring Beran to Rhosgobel and deliver it personally.

Dealing with Dagmar

If the companions choose to fight Dagmar and her men, use the statistics for Servants of the Tyrant's Hill and their Savage Hounds, below. Dagmar does not want to kill the companions – Mogdred does not want to antagonise his neighbours – but neither is she overly solicitous of their health. If the Company surrender or flee, she lets them go. If the companions hand Beran over, then Dagmar and her followers vanish into the forest with the wounded man. He is never seen again.

If the companions insist on bringing Beran to Rhosgobel, then Dagmar offers to accompany them. "These woods are dangerous", she says, "Spiders and worse things draw near." On the way there, Dagmar looks for an opportunity to recapture Beran and the note. She might even attack the Company as they sleep.

If the heroes refuse Dagmar's offer, then she and her men follow them through the woods; if they are unable to escape her, she ambushes them before they reach Rhosgobel. By then, her frustration is enough to drive her to kill.

Servant of Tyrant's Hill

Medium Human

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Armour Class 15 (Mail Shirt, Shield)
Hit Points 19 (3d8+6)
Speed 30 ft

Skills Intimidation +1, Perception +2, Survival +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Westron
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Ambush. During his first turn, the Servant has Advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn.

Craven. If the Servant starts his turn with 9 or less hit points, he must make a **DC 10 Wisdom** saving throw. On a failure, he becomes Frightened and must use his Dash or Disengage action to move away from any enemies. If movement is impossible, he will take the Dodge action instead.

Actions

Broadsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) slashing damage.

Savage Hound

Small Beast

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Armour Class 10
Hit Points 6 (1d6+3)
Speed 30 ft

Skills Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Hunter. The Savage Hound doubles its Proficiency Bonus for all **Wisdom (Perception)** checks (included above).

Pack Tactics. The hound has Advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the its allies is within 5 feet of the creature and that ally isn't Incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

At Rhosgobel

At Rhosgobel, the Company meet Radagast, who is deeply concerned by news of the Orcs at Fenbridge. He has been keeping a close watch over the ruins of Dol Guldur and the other outlying fortresses, and hoped that Mirkwood would enjoy a long time of peace before evil returned to the wood. If the Company wish, they can try to gain Radagast as a patron (see page 101 of the *Rhovanion Region Guide*).

The Lord of the Tyrant's Hill

The companions may wish to know more about Mogdred, the so-called Lord of the Tyrant's Hill (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 120). According to rumour, he commands many well-equipped warriors, and claims part of Southern Mirkwood and the Narrows as his domain.

Some of the settlements in the southern vales pay him tribute. No one among his followers knows where Mogdred comes from, but his tower was once inhabited by Orcs and Men who bore the sigil of the Necromancer.

Year's End

This is one of the last good years before the Shadow returns – when making a Holding Upkeep check, reduce the DC by 2.

- Year 2948 -

for heroes of level 5 or lower

Events

Gandalf travels across Wilderland, with the intention of inviting one of the rulers of the North to become a member of the White Council. He visits the courts of Elves, Dwarves and Men, and is generally received with honour and a little suspicion – where the Grey Pilgrim goes, trouble follows. If Gandalf meets the Company, he asks them questions about their rulers. Unless impressed greatly to the contrary, he resolves not to invite anyone to the White Council, not to compromise the fragile alliance that the North seems to be enjoying. He ends his journey in Rhosgobel, where he rests for a few days and confers with his fellow Wizard.

Representatives from all the houses of the Woodmen gather at Rhosgobel to hear Ceawin the Generous. See *The Folk-moot at Rhosgobel*, below.

Trespassers from Dale enter the Woodland Realm and cut down trees, including some silver beeches that are especially beloved of the Elves.

Una, a young merchant princess from Dorwinion, leaves her court in early summer to visit Dale for diplomatic reasons. A detachment of Barding warriors (possibly including the companions) is sent by King Bard to meet her caravan along the Running River; they reach the merchant convoy just in time to discourage a band of raiders from the East that was following them. When the princess finally arrives in Dale, everyone witnesses how King Bard is captivated by the sight of Una's dancing during the feast held in her honour.

Adventuring Phase: The Folk-moot at Rhosgobel

Representatives from all the Houses of the Woodmen come to Rhosgobel at midsummer. This gathering also brings merchants and traders from far afield. Envoys and guests from other Free Folk are also welcome to attend the folk-moot, where many matters relating to the Woodmen are debated (characters who are not Woodmen may be given special missions or assignments by their rulers to bring up at the gathering).

Notable people present:

- **Ingomer, of the House of Woodland Hall:** Ingomer Axebreaker is the head of the council of elders of Woodland Hall (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 103); he has the loudest voice in the folk-moot and keeps order in the meeting. Ingomer greets the companions as they enter; he announces to the gathering any Woodman hero of great renown.

- **Hartfast, of the House of Mountain Hall:** Old and quarrelsome, Hartfast son of Hartmut is the chieftain of Mountain Hall. Unlike the other Woodmen, the strange folk of the hall always elect a chieftain to rule them and protect them from the Orcs of the Misty Mountains.

- **Fridwald the Runner, of the House of Woodmen-town:** Fridwald is a wiry old man who serves as chief messenger and runner between the three Woodmen settlements of Mirkwood since too many years to count. Despite his advanced age, he is still hale and hardy, and knows the paths of the forest better than anyone else. When the folk of Woodmen-town do not go to Radagast for counsel, they turn to old Fridwald. With him is his nephew Munderic, a lazy boy of ten who Fridwald is vainly trying to convince to be a messenger for the Woodmen too.

- **Radagast the Brown:** By ancient tradition, the Wizard attends all folk-moots as an honoured friend.

Radagast says little, preferring to sit in a corner and amuse the children with his magical dancing mice.

- **Amaleoda, Shieldmaiden of the Black Tarn:** in charge of her family since her father's death, Amaleoda and her kin live on the western shore of the Black Tarn. They are fishers and hunters. Of the Woodmen, they live closest to the Shadow of Dol Guldur.

Special guests:

- **Ceawin the Generous:** Golden-haired Ceawin is the young leader of a band of settlers in the East Bight, on the far side of Mirkwood. Most of his followers are distant kin to the Woodmen.

- **Bofri, son of Bofur:** The Dwarf visits the folk-moot in search of brave warriors and scouts who can help him explore the remains of the Old Forest Road (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 93).

Chance Meetings

Before the folk-moot begins, the Company can meet friends, gather rumours or speak with Radagast. They may hear tell of recent events, learn old stories like the tale of Balthi, rumours about the River-maidens, or learn of the loss of Ingomer's son in the forest by using any relevant social skills. Ceawin's followers are everywhere, offering gifts of food, drink and gold to win support.

The Moot Begins

At first, the folk-moot deals with trivial matters. The assembled elders discuss trade between their Houses and their allies. The traders of Mountain Hall complain about the tolls requested by the Beornings; the folk of Woodmen-town ask for more iron and tin; foreign merchants come to sell swords and spear-heads made by Dwarves in the north.

Next, the folk of the Black Tarn speak. Amaleoda says that the recent years brought wonderful harvests, that the lake is alive with fish, and the pestilent fogs that sometimes blew up from the south are gone. The Maiden of the Lake welcomes their presence. They invite more of the Woodmen to come south with them to the Black Tarn, for they intend to raise a longhouse and build a larger walled settlement. The Woodmen greet this prospect with enthusiasm, but Ingomer raises his hands for silence.

"One not of our people – though a kin from afar – asked to speak here. Come forth, Ceawin."

Ceawin Speaks

Ceawin the Generous climbs up on a platform to address the crowd. "For those who do not know me," and here he addresses himself chiefly to Hartfast, "my people dwell in the East Bight of Mirkwood." Ceawin lists the virtues of the East Bight – the soil is fertile, it is close to the rich lands of Dale and Dorwinion, and it was the home of the Northmen of old. He has many followers and a sturdy longhouse. He asks to be counted among the Woodmen – his people need to learn how to survive in Mirkwood, and offers friendship and wealth in exchange.

The response to Ceawin's speech is divided. Some are suspicious of newcomers; others, like Hartfast of Mountain Hall, recognise the wisdom of his request. Firienseld is, after all, even further from Woodmen-town than the East Bight, and they are counted among the Woodmen.

Just before Ingomer calls for the vote, one of Radagast's birds flaps down and lands on the Wizard's shoulder, cawing frantically. A moment later, the sound of horns echoes out of the wood.

The Prodigal Son

A dozen riders emerge quietly from the shadow of the trees. If the companions played through *The Wizard's Man* (page 11), they recognise the garb of the men of the Tyrant's Hill. All are armed, and their weapons seem both well-made and well-used. Two of them have big sacks tied to the back of their mounts. At their head rides a dread figure, wearing a helm made in the likeness of a dragon.

"Only Woodmen and their friends are welcome here," declares Ingomer.

The stranger removes his helm. "But I am a Woodman, by blood and birth. Don't you recognise me? You called me Ingold, your son, though men now call me Mogdred." Shaken, Ingomer sits down.

Mogdred address the crowd. "For many years, I was a slave in the dungeons of the Necromancer! Now I am lord of the place you call the Tyrant's Hill, and I command many men." He points his sword at Amaleoda. "You and yours would be long dead if it were not for our protection. Darkness returns to the forest, had you but eyes to see it. There are Orcs in Fenbridge, and shadows stir in Dol Guldur."

A warrior in the crowd wants to know what Mogdred asks of this folk-moot. He responds with scorn, "A seat in the councils of the Woodmen, tribute from the Black Tarn, wives for my warriors, gold from the mountains. That stranger -" he points at Ceawin the Generous, "offered you trinkets and sweetcakes. My offer is of a more practical sort."

His two followers up-end the sacks they brought with them. Dozens of Orc-heads tumble from them. "What say you?" he demands arrogantly.

5 The Debate

The Woodmen must choose how to respond. The companions may attempt to sway the Woodmen. **Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, Performance** or **Persuasion**); **Intelligence (History, Riddle** or **Traditions**) or **Wisdom (Insight)** might all be used to influence the attendees. The difficulty varies according to the proposal of which there are three:

- **Welcome Ceawin's people into the Woodmen:** On the one hand, they are wealthy and an alliance with them would make the Woodmen stronger. On the other, Ceawin is a stranger, and the East Bight is far away – if Orcs have come back to Southern Mirkwood, then maintaining trade with the East Bight will be perilous.

  *Opinion on Ceawin's proposal is divided amidst the Woodmen. It requires a **DC 10** check to sway them either way. If the heroes do not speak for or against Ceawin, the Woodmen will vote for him to join them after much debate.*

- **Build a new hall at the Black Tarn:** Amaleoda's folk are prospering, and establishing a new House would strengthen the Woodmen as a whole. The Black Tarn is rich in fish, and they have the friendship of the River-maidens.

  *Virtually everyone supports Amaleoda on principle, but some fear that the new village is too close to the dangers of the south. To speak for Amaleoda is **DC 10** and against her is **DC 15.** Unless strongly persuaded otherwise, the Woodmen readily agree to the raising of a new longhouse.*

- **Welcome the Lord of Tyrant's Hill into the Woodmen:** Mogdred's sudden appearance at the conclave means that few people are sure what to think. He strongly implied a threat – "If you're not my friends, then you're my enemies, and you already have more enemies than you know" – and that was not the act of a kind man. He demanded tribute instead of asking for friendship, and seemed to consider the Black Tarn part of his domain. However, is it not better to have his warriors as allies instead of enemies? If the Woodmen refuse Mogdred, then he could threaten both a new Black Tarn village and anyone travelling to the East Bight. Also, he is Ingomer's son, and Ingomer was a good leader. His son clearly suffered in the dungeons, and he is not very polite, but is that a good reason to reject him?

  *Shocked, the Woodmen find it hard to accept Mogdred. To speak for the newcomer requires **DC 20** but arguments against him are only **DC 10**. Unless strongly persuaded otherwise, the Woodmen reject Mogdred's offer.*

After some time, Ingomer calls for a vote.

Judgement of the Folk-moot

The decisions made here have repercussions long into the future:

PROPOSAL	ACCEPTED	REJECTED
Ceawin	Over the next few years, several Woodmen families move to the East Bight to settle there. Ceawin names his main settlement the Sunstead, and it prospers for several years.	Ceawin returns empty-handed and angry. His people rapidly dwindle as many flee the forest to the safer land of the Bardings to the north.
Amleoda	Any Woodmen who wish to settle by the lake are welcomed in Black Tarn Hall. Many people from Woodmen-town and Rhosgobel go east to help its building.	Shocked and surprised, the shieldmaiden returns home to the lake. Her people continue to grow in numbers, but more and more of them turn to Mogdred's men for protection.
Mogdred	Mogdred's men help protect the Woodmen's southern border, but they cause lots of trouble. There is bitter fighting between the Orcs of Fenbridge Castle and the warriors of the Tyrant's Hill.	Angered, Mogdred returns to his fortress. His warriors become raiders, attacking the Woodmen settlements and making travel through the forest even more dangerous.

If both Amaleoda's and Mogdred's proposals were accepted, the two Houses watch each other suspiciously. If the Woodmen support Ceawin or Amaleoda (or both), but reject Mogdred, then the new Woodman settlements are virtually cut off by the men of Tyrant's Hill, and travelling to those areas becomes dangerous.

YEAR'S END

Companions spending the Fellowship phase in Dale or Esgaroth hear news of how King Bard is wooing fair Una of Dorwinion. Barding heroes of sufficient rank may even play an important part in the king's betrothal as amorous intermediaries, if they wish to intervene and be involved.

- YEAR 2949 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 5 OR LOWER

EVENTS

Early this year, King Bard marries Una of Dorwinion. The bond reinforces the status of the kingdom of Dale as a rising power in the North, as Una comes with a rich dowry of gold and diplomatic relations. In December, Una gives birth to a male child, Prince Bain, making Bard a father at the age of 38.

Spiders attack a Woodman boat travelling down the Dusky River. The River-maidens intercede to save the Woodmen by guiding them out of the webs. One of the Woodmen reports seeing a gigantic Spider lurking in the shadows.

Gollum lingers on the fringes of the Western Eaves, stealing food from the Woodmen. One farmer tries to catch the chicken-thief; Gollum retaliates by terrifying the farmer's cows, who trample the Woodman to death. Ingomer of Woodland Hall puts a bounty on the head of this 'Bloody Ghost'.

Beorn visits Northern Mirkwood, and meets with the Elves. King Thranduil sends emissaries to meet with him. Elven heroes who have good relations with the Beornings may be included in this mission.

Tensions with the Barding villages along the eastern border of the Woodland Realm continue, as the Bardings trespass into the lands of the Elves.

Balin and Gandalf visit Bilbo in the Shire. On the way, they speak of Moria and Balin begins dreaming of a return to that lost city.

ADVENTURING PHASE: THE QUESTING BEASTS

For many years, King Thranduil has hunted the fabled white deer of Mirkwood, a race of enchanted beasts known to roam all of the forest. They are rarely seen, and some consider their appearance to foreshadow portentous events. Recently, hunters have spotted the creatures in Northern Mirkwood, and the Elvenking has called for a royal hunt.

Normally, only Elves of the Woodland Realm would be invited to participate in such a hunt, but the Elvenking declares that mortals may participate if they are friends of the realm. A few Woodmen and warriors from Dale and Lake-town are allowed to join in the hunt. If the heroes have good relations with the Woodland Realm, or have Thranduil as a patron, they receive invitations. Alternatively, if the characters have a different patron, then he may ask them to represent him at Thranduil's hunt.

The hunt begins at the Elvenking's Halls, then ranges out to the north and west. Thranduil and some of the Elves ride grey horses that seem to magically slip through the thickets and undergrowth without impediment, but most hunters are on foot. The hunt may take many weeks to complete, as the white deer wander far into Northern Mirkwood.

Ruthiel

One of the hunters who sets out at the same time as the companions is an Elf-maiden named Ruithel, famed as a huntress and a tracker. She wields one of the treasures of the Woodland Realm, the bow Penbregol, strung with mithril by the Dwarf-smith Gamil Zirak in the depths of time. Ruithel was recently promoted to command the guards who watch the Elf-path and the borders of the Realm, and is eager to prove herself worthy of the office and the bow that comes with it.

Ruithel laughs at any mortal hunters. Mirkwood has been her home for more than two thousand years; how can they call themselves hunters and woodwise when they have not watched these mighty oaks leap up young and green in the spring of the world? She also speaks softly but coldly about the humans who trespassed in the east of the Realm, and how they will be punished if they lay axe to tree again.

The Bow of Sudden Fury

Penbregol is a Woodland Bow (see page 159 of the *Player's Guide*) with the Superior Keen enchanted quality (see the *Loremaster's Guide*, page 138).

The magical bow is irreplaceable and is traditionally held by the captain of the Elvenking's guard. Any mortal who chooses to keep the bow is regarded with Mistrust by any Elves, who recognise it on sight.

Hunting the White Deer

The white deer are somewhere in Northern Mirkwood. When the Loremaster finds it to be convenient, the creatures are spotted by scouts somewhere near the Company and the chase is on (if the Loremaster prefers a random method, he may roll the d20 each morning of the hunt. A result of '20' means a deer is close by.).

Each hero is allowed either a **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)** or **Intelligence (Investigation** or **Nature)** check each day to find the trail. A success means that the hero can roll again the following day and the day after - three successful checks in a row brings a hero within sight of a white deer.

A companion who spots a white deer encounters a single animal, or maybe a hind with fawns, as they stand glimmering in the shadows – a hero has just enough time to let loose an arrow (any other action sees the animals turn and vanish silently in the forest). The deer has **AC 18**: 5 points of damage or more kills the animal; otherwise the hurt creature disappears into the darkness of Mirkwood. As an option, the Loremaster may choose to run *The Pit of the Exiled Dwarves* (below) while the Company is on the hunt. A white deer might even lead the heroes to Ruithel in her time of need.

If a hero brings a white deer down, he is feasted and féted at Thranduil's Hall; this is certainly a deed worthy of reward... the hero receives gifts from Thranduil equal to 100s.

Killing a Hart in Mirkwood

In *The Hobbit*, Thorin Oakenshield shoots an arrow into a leaping hart just before the Company encounters the white hind and her fawns (it is possible that the dark hart was the male companion of the snow-white hind). Moments later, Bombur falls into the waters of the Enchanted River...

If the Loremaster likes the idea, he may have a hero hunting the white deer find a dark stag instead, guarding his mate and young (following the rules described above). If the hart is killed everyone gains a Shadow point, and something really bad happens! Examples include: a Miserable hero suffers a bout of madness, a companion has a riding accident, the noise of the hunt rouses the unwanted attention of a whole Spider colony, and so on.

1 The Pit of the Exiled Dwarves

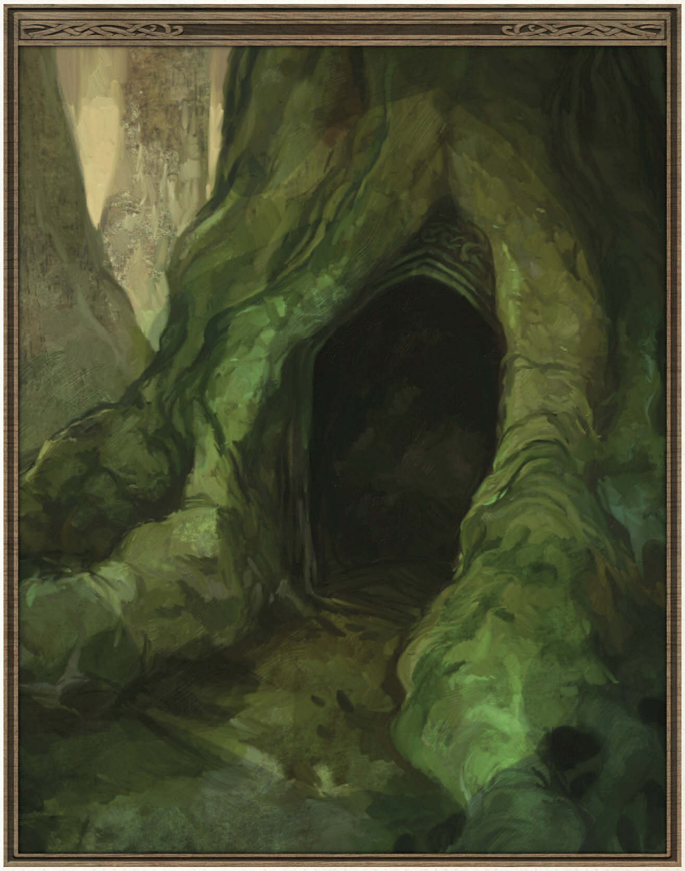
While travelling through Northern Mirkwood, the Company comes across a strange sight – a deep pit cut into the forest floor, opening among the thick roots and fallen leaves. The pit was obviously concealed in the underbrush until recently.

At the bottom of the pit, keen-eyed companions (anyone with passive Perception of 13 or higher) spot a silvery glimmer in the murky green light: it is the precious bow Penbregol! Something must have happened to Ruithel.

A moment later, a pair of hooded Dwarves emerge from a concealed door in the side of what appears to be a dead tree, but is actually a cunningly carved entrance to their underground lair. They do not approach the Company, but watch them warily. The two introduce themselves as the brothers Polin and Pomin, exiles from the vanished Greydelve. They claim that this region is their home, and that the companions are trespassing. If asked about Ruithel, they admit the Elf is in their custody: they claim that she cut the beard from their chieftain Frár the Beardless (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 22 — this is actually an unfortunate misunderstanding; it was Guilin, the former holder of Ruithel's office that shaved Frár. The two Dwarves recognised the famous bow and assumed that Ruithel was responsible.)

The Dwarves claim Ruithel as their prisoner, and refuse to release her. If the Company try to attack the Dwarves, they flee back inside the hollow tree and run down the concealed spiral staircase to the caves below. The entrance to the hollow tree is concealed with spells of secrecy, requiring a **DC 30 Intelligence (Investigation)** check (**DC 15** for a Dwarf) to find. If combat becomes inevitable, use the Dwarf entry on page 77 of the *Loremaster's Guide* for the brothers.

The Dwarves say they will ransom Ruithel once Frár arrives, but that may take many weeks. If they must, they let the heroes get her bow in exchange for their silence.



Saving Ruithel 5

There are several possible ways for the Company to rescue Ruithel. They could try to gain entrance to the Dwarves' dwelling and fight their way past them. They could negotiate. The Dwarves have two Motivations – revenge and help reclaiming their former home, the Greydelve, from the Orcs. Negotiating with the two brothers is tricky, as both are half-mad, and their Expectations are often unreasonable (Polin expects that the heroes exalt Frár as the greatest living Dwarf-lord; Pomin often begins or ends sentences in the middle and becomes frustrated if the heroes cannot follow his reasoning).

They can also try to trick or threaten the Dwarves into giving up the Elf, but this will result in their perpetual enmity. If the Company can engineer a peaceful resolution, then both Ruithel and the Dwarves are in their debt. Thranduil may even consider meeting with their chieftain Frár and helping the Dwarves in retaking the Greydelve. If the Company leave Ruithel to her fate, she escapes the captivity of the Dwarves several weeks later. Ever after, she bears a grudge against mortals, and becomes sympathetic to the beliefs of the Wayward Elves (*Rhovanion Region Guide,* page 86).

5

Year's End

This is a quiet year, although heroes who successfully hunted the white deer and stay at Thranduil's Halls for their Fellowship phase can treat it as a Sanctuary for the purposes of recovering Hit Dice.

- Year 2950 -

For Heroes of Level 5 or 6

Events

At the instigation of Gandalf, the Elvenking dispatches scouts to the Mountains of Mirkwood. Their mission is to search for records or documents that might have been hidden there when the Necromancer fled from Dol Guldur. The scouts find nothing, but report that evil things are stirring in the dark.

The strength of the Orcs at Fenbridge Castle grows. If Mogdred was welcomed into the Woodmen in 2948, then his men stop the worst attacks. Otherwise, settlements along the Black Tarn and the East Bight are attacked by Orcs this year. At the suggestion of Gandalf, Radagast travels to Dol Guldur. See *Secrets Buried,* below.

The Woodmen continue to hunt for the 'Bloody Ghost'. Some mutter darkly about Mogdred's men, and blame them for the evil.

A few of the younger Elves at a feast in the Bower (*Rhovanian Region Guide*, page 82) decide to punish the Bardings for their trespassing. When a group of foresters next enter the woods, the Elves harass and ensorcel them, weaving spells around the mortals. The foresters lose their way and wander into the depths of the forest. Three are met by friendlier Elves and guided back to the Elf-path, but another goes mad and dies.

Adventuring Phase: Secrets Buried

Radagast calls upon the companions for aid. If he does not know them already, he summons them by sending a talking squirrel to each of them; Radagast is friendly to all the birds and beasts of the forest, and they do his errands. His furry messenger bids the Company to gather at the docks of Woodmen-town on Midsummer's Day.

If the companions go to the meeting-place on the appointed day, they see a boat of strange design emerge out of the summer mists on the dusky river. It has a high prow decorated with the carved head of a bird, and low flanks swept back like wooden wings. A brown sail billows from its tall mast. Radagast stands with one hand on the tiller, his staff resting at his feet. He welcomes the Company on board.

Radagast is going to the south shore of the Black Tarn. As they probably know, he explains, until some years ago a great evil was threatening to overcome Mirkwood. Then, a council of the wise and powerful chose to act and evil was banished.

But even the wise sometimes fail to see the end of all things, and something rotten might have been left to fester in the forest. Will the companions help him to make sure that a deeper shadow doesn't rise to take the place of the first?

2

To the Black Tarn

The journey takes only one day (and as such does not provoke any Journey Events). The boat seems much too big for the narrow river, but it somehow passes through even the thickest parts of the forest without getting caught, as if the branches parted overhead to let the mast and sails go by. Sometimes, the heroes hear bubbling laughter or glimpse the shape of a woman in the water – one of the River-maidens is nearby (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 100).

At the Black Tarn, Radagast and the Company disembark on the south shore of the lake, far from the eyes of the villagers of Black Tarn Hall. The Wizard leaves the companions and climbs a green hillock rising above the lakefront some distance away. When he reaches the top, he is met there by a tall, dark-haired, dusky-skinned woman in a black robe. She and Radagast speak privately for a few moments, then the Wizard returns.

Radagast explains that the lady he has spoken to is another River-maiden, the eldest and most powerful. She has confirmed Radagast's darkest fears - something is stirring in Southern Mirkwood. The companions leave the boat and set off marching south.

2

From the Black Tarn to the Tyrant's Hill

The second part of the journey covers some thirty miles through the Narrows of the Forest. Since they are travelling with Radagast, the journey into Southern Mirkwood is not quite as forboding as it might be: the Peril Rating is 3, and it takes only three days of travel to reach Amon Bauglir. the Company will experience 1d2-1 Journey Events along the way.

If the men of the East Bight are allies of the Woodmen after 2948, then the Company may meet other travellers going to or coming from the new village of Sunstead. On the afternoon of the third day, the Company spot a tall tower rising above the tree-tops on a distant hill. Radagast explains that it is the Tyrant's Hill, once the northernmost outpost of Dol Guldur. Smoke climbs from many chimneys, and the tower is clearly inhabited.

If Mogdred is an ally of the Woodmen at this time, then the Company can safely visit the tower (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 120). Mogdred is an unwelcoming host and mistrusts the Wizard, but he grudgingly allows them to stay. However, if Mogdred was rejected at the folk-moot of Rhosgobel, then the Company must sneak past the vigilance of the tower (this requires a group **Stealth** check against **DC 12**). If this fails, then Radagast decides to return to Rhosgobel — the evil in the hearts of these folk is enough of an answer for him. Whether the companions push on without him is up to them.

4

From the Tyrant's Hill to the Fens of Dol Guldur

South of the Tyrant's Hill, the journey changes dramatically. The Company are now in the haunted woods of Southern Mirkwood, where the shadow lies heavily on the forest. Even in midsummer, these woods are slimy and dank and foul.

The journey to the edge of Dol Guldur covers sixty miles and takes ten days, as even Radagast starts to suffer from the oppressing gloom and noxious vapours that rise in the morning and start to dissipate only by midday - the Peril Rating goes to 5 and they face 1d2 Journey Events (see below).

When the Company enters the fens that surround the hill of sorcery, every companion must start making one Corruption check (a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw) every day (for the last three days of the journey). On a failure, they gain 1 Shadow point.

Once in the marshes, Radagast explains that the castle of Fenbridge lies a short distance to the east. The Fenbridge (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 120) is a much easier way through the swamp, but it is guarded by Orcs.

The Company can choose to either risk a nasty encounter or to try their way through the swamps. Braving the swamps requires at least one hero to make a **DC 20 Wisdom (Survival)** check to plot a manageable course.

Journey Events for the Fens of Dol Guldur

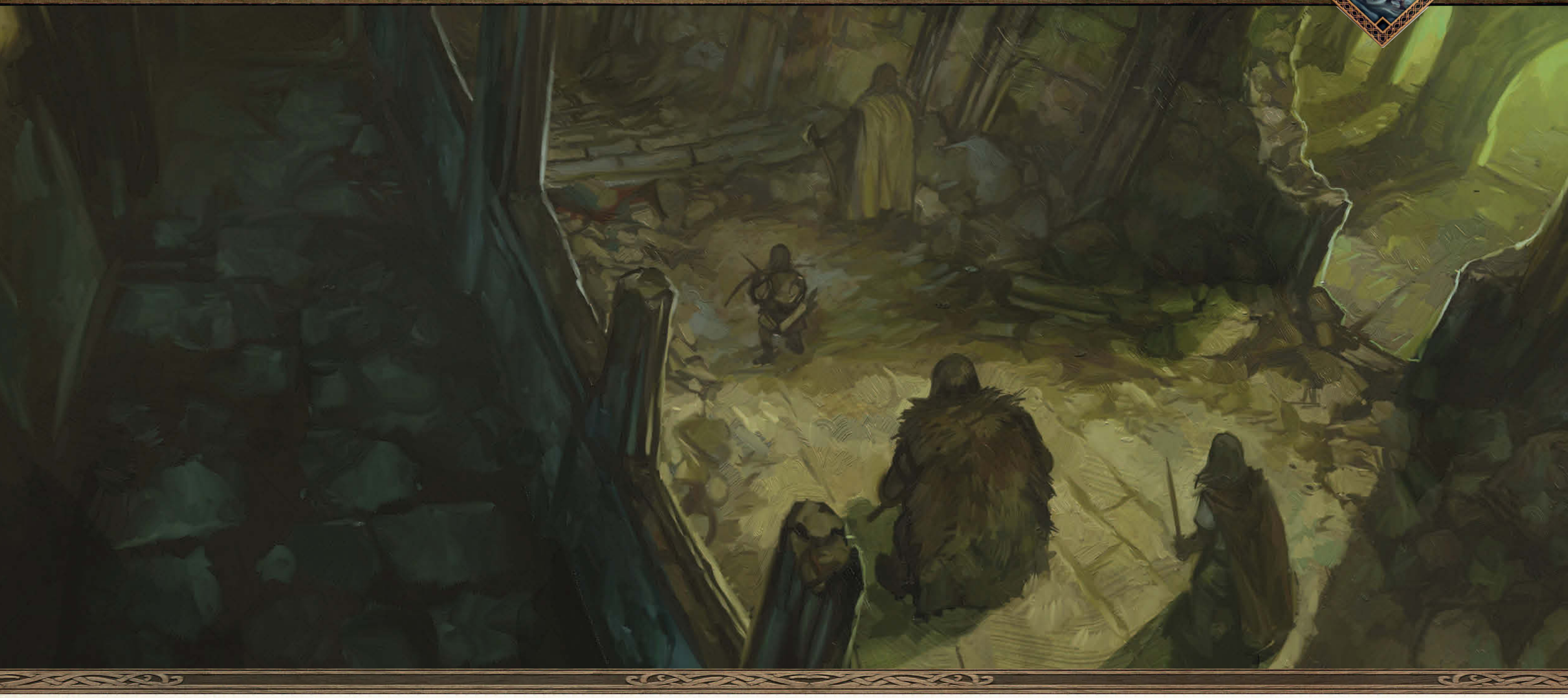
For most Journey Events, the normal table can be used without modification (or you may use *Shadows in the Forest*, page 133). But if the Loremaster wishes to use a custom event, a few are provided in the table below.

Into Dol Guldur

The former fortress of the Necromancer is presented starting on page 120 of the *Rhovanion Region Guide*. In 2950, the fortress is empty. Exploring the lower sections, the Company find signs that a few scavenger Orcs were here recently, but it seems they fell to quarrelling and fought each other. Radagast warns the Company not to stray far into the ruins – they should restrict their search to the High Keep. They are to look for any documents related to whatever the Necromancer was planning just before he was driven from Dol Guldur.

Simply walking into the darkness of the keep requires a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw. Those who fail are Frightened until they take a short rest. Exploring the keep requires five successful **DC 15 Intelligence** (**Investigation**) checks.

Journey Event	Customisation Notes
3 (An Obstacle)	The Company has blundered into a sucking sinkhole. Each hero must make a **Strength** (**Athletics**) check in order to free themselves. On a failure, the hero gains a level of Exhaustion. Regardless of success or failure, the player must choose one item that was lost in the bog. If the Company has animal companions, at least one hero must make a **Wisdom** (**Animal Handling**) check in order to avoid endangering it. The heroes have Advantage if they are on *Paths Both Swift and True*, or Disadvantage if they face *The Wearisome Toil of Many Leagues*.
4 (In Need of Help)	As they lay down to rest one evening, the companions' dreams are filled with the desperate cries of lost travellers and the captured thralls that once were housed in Dol Guldur. Despite their efforts, the heroes find that, even in their dreams, they cannot save the doomed souls. Each hero must make a **Wisdom** saving throw or gain a level of Exhaustion from their terrible nightmares.
6 (The Wonders of Middle-earth)	For once, the fingers of the Sun reach into the gloom of the fens as morning comes. The swamp bursts into life as the many creatures that call it home greet the new day. If Radagast is with the heroes, he is moved to tell stories of their lives and ambitions. If the Wizard is present, each hero automatically recovers one level of Exhaustion. Otherwise, use the regular rules on page 170 of the *Player's Guide*.
12+ (Fly you Fools!)	The heroes are closer than they realise and have reached the outer moat of Dol Guldur. Dozens of grasping hands emerge from the fetid water, and each hero is automatically Grappled. They must make a **Strength** (**Athletics**) check to break free. Each round they fail to do so, they receive 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage as the hands attempt to drag them under. Striking at the undead limbs can give another hero Advantage on their next check, but there are too many for strength of arms alone to defeat... the heroes must escape the moat.



For every successful check, the Loremaster should reveal one of the following clues (in order) until the completion of the search.

- **A Corpse.** The Company find the corpse of an Orc, curled up in a corner. The brute was stabbed with a knife and crawled off to die. The blade is still stuck between the Orc's ribs, and is of Elven make – it was forged in the Woodland Realm. A **DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine)** check suggests he was only killed recently – despite the proximity of the marshes, his body is relatively uncorrupted.

- **A Puzzling Door.** The Company find a heavy iron door deep within the keep. It is open: a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation** or **Riddle)** check will reveal that its lock was picked only a short while ago, while at some point long before that, some mighty brute smashed at the door with a huge axe – the deep scars in the iron-shod frame bear testament to that.

- **More Riddles.** In the labyrinth of abandoned corridors and cells beyond the iron door, the Company find several scattered parchments. It is clear that this was once a library, and it was hastily abandoned. Some of the documents speak of scouting missions into the Vales of Anduin, and another has an alarmingly up-to-date description of the military forces of Lake-town. The majority of the documents are written in the Common Tongue, but some are in Elvish and others in the Black Speech of Mordor. Radagast cautions the Company against reading those scrolls.

- **A Secret Strife.** In a side room, the companions find another body. This time, the remains are those of a Man, a fellow from Lake-town by his garb. His cloak is caked with dried mud and blood, and his stiff fingers press against a gaping wound in his side that was made by the jagged Orc-sword that lies beside him. A **DC 10 Intelligence (Riddle)** check makes sequence of events clear – the human was surprised by the Orc, they fought, and both mortally wounded the other. Searching his belongings reveals a pouch of 60 lozenge-shaped silver pennies, coins minted in the Woodland Realm and usually employed to deal with foreigners .

- **Black Treachery!** Aha! Near the body is a grating in the floor, and stuffed into this grating are a handful of bloodstained pages. The pages are written in the Common Speech, and describe the Woodland Realm in considerable detail. They mention the guards along the Elf-path and Forest River, the East Gate, and the defences of Thranduil's Halls. Whoever gave this information to the Enemy clearly had an intimate knowledge of the Woodland Realm...

Once the companions find the documents, Radagast urges them to leave immediately. On the journey home, he confides that their find proves that there is a traitor in Thranduil's Halls. The Wizard had hoped that the Woodland Realm would continue to be a bastion against the corruption of Mirkwood, for the Elves have never willingly served the Enemy, but it seems that even this hope is lost.

Exploring the High Keep

A dark will is focused on the companions while they are inside the High Keep, and sooner or later they will feel its malevolence. While in the Keep, any natural 1 result on the d20 means that the dark will has touched the character's heart and the hero gains a point of Shadow.

Whenever the player achieves a natural 20 result, the dark will focuses on that hero. The companion must immediately make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the Loremaster should select one of the following effects:

- *Terrifying Vision.* The hero becomes Frightened until they take a long rest. If they were already Frightened (and were perhaps forcibly dragged into the High Keep), they become Stunned instead.
- *The Shadow of the Past.* For a moment, the hero has a sense of the abject terror that most subjects of the Necromancer felt here. The companion gains 2 points of Shadow.
- *Sickness.* The hero develops a strange, unnatural fever that the curative arts cannot dispel. Until the hero takes a long rest, they recover only half the normal amount of hit points from any healing source.

The Secret of Dol Guldur

The spy in the Elvenking's court is Halbrech, the wineseller from Lake-town (see the *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 86). He hired a mercenary from Esgaroth to sneak into Dol Guldur and destroy any evidence connecting him to the Enemy.

Now that the Necromancer is gone, Halbrech hopes to put all that behind him, also because he recently became a father. He would do anything to preserve his daughter Hanna from harm, and to maintain his position in Thranduil's court (Halbrech's dark past will resurface many years later - see the adventure *Treachery in the Woods* on page 87).

Year's End

Radagast blesses the Company after they return from Dol Guldur. Any character who accompanied him into the black stronghold and undertakes to Heal Corruption (see the *Player's Guide*, page 200) reduces their Shadow total by twice the usual amount.

the return of the shadow:

- 2951-2960 -

Evil spirits enter Dol Guldur to reclaim the fortress for their master. Malevolent creatures return to the forest to pledge their allegiance. New threats rise to menace both the Woodmen and the Silvan Elves as the ruined stronghold of Southern Mirkwood is restored to its former strength.

- year 2951 -

for heroes of level 5 or 6

Events

At long last, Sauron unveils his presence in Mordor, and commands his servants to gather in the Black Land. Characters with at least a permanent Shadow point or a total Shadow of 3 or more may experience nightmares; mostly visions of the Black Land, the raising of the Dark Tower or the Flaming Eye.

In the dead of winter, three shades enter Dol Guldur - the Ringwraiths have returned in Southern Mirkwood, and soon busy themselves with the errands their dark master has given them. The first wraith, the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, remains to haunt its ruins and drive away any intruders. For many years, the wraith drives to madness all those who trespass into the dark stronghold. The second wraith, the Ghost of the Forest, travels to the Mountains of Mirkwood, gathering Orcs and Vampires. He seeks out the Werewolf of Mirkwood and informs it that the agony that constantly wracks its body is the result of Elven magic. The third wraith, the Messenger of Mordor, enters the Heart of Mirkwood and addresses the Parliament of Spiders (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 113). To renew the ancient alliance between the Shadow and Shelob's children, he brings with him five great red gems, cut and fashioned of old by Celebrimbor of Hollin. Three are consumed by the three Children of Shelob; they quarrel over the other two. The Ringwraith convinces Tyulqin the Weaver to aid him in attacking the Woodmen.

At some time, Gollum finally leaves Mirkwood. He soon turns in the direction of Mordor, as if heeding a call.

Adventuring Phase: The Helm of Peace

Things are stirring in the dark places of the woods. The name of Sauron is not yet spoken aloud in the North, as most recognise it only as a shadow on the borders of

old stories. Still, the Enemy's power grows, and in the lengthening Shadow old horrors awaken.

In the winter of 2951 the folk of the East Bight start to whisper of glowing lights that dance amid the long barrows where their ancestors lie, and of groaning voices that echo from the deepest tombs. The Hall of Ghosts (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 115) is seen twice by hunters, and the discovery of four dead men — killed, seemingly, by fright — convinces Ceawin that something must be done.

Following the advice of seers, the chieftain of the East Bight decides that the dead must be honoured with a gift, and hires a Dwarf smith to forge a helm that commemorates the deeds of the Northmen of old.

If the companions are in the East Bight or are allies of Ceawin (perhaps they voted in his favour at the folk-moot of 2948) then he may ask them to travel to Lake-town to collect the helm. Alternatively, if they are in Erebor, Dale or Lake-town, they may meet Ceawin's representative and be hired to deliver the helm to the East Bight.

2

A Gift for the Dead

The bejewelled helm is ready by the very end of summer. It is a magnificent steel helmet inlaid with gold, made after the fashion of the Northmen. It is carved with images of heroes, and two golden trees grow on the cheek-guards, their branches twining overhead in an arch over the brow of the wearer. Mounted directly above the brow is a glittering green gem, and its crest is made of fine horsehair. The helm is worth a dozen gold pieces or more.

The easiest route to the East Bight from the North is the one currently used by merchants travelling south. Ten years after the death of Smaug the traffic has intensified, and it is not so difficult now to find a boat that navigates the Running River, to then take the paths that follow the eaves of Mirkwood to the south. The journey has a Peril Rating of 2, and provokes 1d2+1 Journey Events.

En route, the Company may encounter the few folk who dwell in the sullen valleys along the eastern edge of Mirkwood, like Gwina, a wandering merchant from Dorwinion (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 111).

The Outlaws

4

The helm's journey south is watched by unfriendly eyes. A band of outlaws intends to ambush the Company. These outlaws are led by a warrior named Beldir and his lover Valdis (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 112). The outlaws use Valdis' raven Eágbitar ('Eyebiter') as a spy and scout. If the bird finds them suitable victims, then they mount an ambush. Valdis has heard tell of the helm of the dead, and intends to steal it.

The Company's Hunter may spot the strange behaviour of the bird Eágbitar with a **DC 13 Wisdom (Survival)** check.

If this fails, the Look-out may make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check to detect the ambush. Otherwise, the heroes are Surprised. Beldir's force consists of an Outlaw (see the *Loremaster's Guide*, pages 74-75) per hero, including himself (Loremasters running this adventure for more experienced heroes might make Beldir an Outlaw Chief instead a regular Outlaw). Valdis stays at the rear of the battle, spitting curses at the Company but only risking her neck if victory seems assured. Beldir spares the companions if they hand over the helm.

If the companions slay Beldir, Valdis escapes into the woods. Valdis is featured again in the tale of years in the entry for 2962; if Valdis is slain, her role in the campaign can be taken by her vengeful younger sister Valya.

6 Ghosts of the East Bight

The helm arrives at its destination when it is already autumn. An unseasonably cold wind out of the North has been blowing for weeks, and the land sleeps under a shroud of snow. Many villagers believes the sudden cold is a curse from the barrows, and that the gift of the helm is an even more urgent errand.

Ceawin asks the Company to accompany him into the wood; few of his other warriors are brave to enter the shadow of the trees these days. The journey into the forest is a short one. Snow tumbles from laden branches, and the bare trees resemble leering skeletons or clutching fingers. Patches of ice seem placed with deliberate malice. After half an hour's walk, the companions find one of the barrows of old. Ceawin sweeps away some snow to reveal that the mound is covered in Evermind flowers, which were traditionally planted on the graves of the kings of old. The entrance to the tomb is a small gap between the roots of an oak tree. Ceawin lights a torch, takes the helm and climbs down alone.

The companions hear his voice, but it is very distant as though he were many miles under the earth. He asks for the honoured dead of the North to bless his people, and thanks them for the fertile land they carved from the forest. He offers them this helm as a gift. Suddenly, the air grows intensely cold, and a sepulchral voice speaks in answer.

Cold be hand and heart and bone
And cold be sleep under stone:
Never more to wake on stony bed,
Never, 'til the Sun fails and the Moon is dead.

Those that hear the incantation must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or become Frightened of the barrow. All of Ceawin's guards turn round and flee. Characters who are willing can enter the barrow, but only one character at a time can wriggle through the narrow entrance (and it is even narrower now, as if the tree-roots have clenched together to bar the way)

If a character enters the dark barrow, lit only by Ceawin's guttering, dropped torch, he dimly makes out a figure lying on a stone bier, and looming over the bier is a bony shadow — a Wood-wight (see *Rhovanion Region Guide,* page 138). The Wight has the helm of the dead clutched in its cold fingers, and is about to place it on Ceawin's head.

If the companions fail to defeat the Wood-wight (or give it the opportunity to place the helm on Ceawin's head), then the undead horror vanishes a moment later. Ceawin recovers and emerges from the tomb, now wearing the helm. He claims that the 'kings of old' crowned him, and that the Wights will not trouble the East Bight again. In truth, the Wood-wight has cursed him, and Ceawin is now in the thrall of the dead.

If the companions rescue Ceawin from the Wood-wight, then the barrow collapses on top of them. Each character must make a **DC 13 Strength** check to break free, suffering 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage on a failure and half of that on a success. Some of the heroes feel cold dead hands clutching at them, trying to drag them down into the grave. The helm is lost forever.

Year's End

If the companions successfully delivered the helm of peace, then Ceawin offers land to any character without a holding and gives the hero permission to build a farm there.

- YEAR 2952 -

for heroes of level 5 or 6

Events

Duskwater, the eldest of the three River-maidens, falls into a trap set by the Messenger of Mordor and the Spider Tyulqin. The maiden is wrapped in a web that poisons her mind, turning her against the Woodmen. Fishing in the Black Tarn is especially poor this year.

Viglund the Cruel (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 31) tries to seize the Forest Gate. The Beornings object, and the two sides clash under the forest eaves. Initially, Viglund's men have the upper hand and several Beornings are slain or taken prisoner, but then they glimpse a bear moving through the woods and flee, fearing the wrath of Beorn.

A trade fair is held in Woodmen-town. Any hero owning a holding in or near Woodmen-town reduces the DC for a Holding Upkeep check by 2 until year's end.

If Ceawin of the East Bight is under the thrall of the Wood-wights (see *The Helm of Peace*, page 25), then his behaviour becomes more erratic over the coming years. Sometimes, he slips into black rages; at other times, he speaks as though he is one of the Northmen who died in the Bight a thousand years ago. He grows increasingly mistrustful of the Woodmen of the Western Eaves.

Adventuring Phase: The Staff of the Roadwarden

If the companions are in any of the Woodmen settlements of Mirkwood, Bofri, son of Bofur (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 93) seeks them out. He has heard of their courage and skill, and asks for their help.

Since arriving in Mirkwood four years earlier, Bofri has surveyed both ends of the Old Forest Road outside the forest. He believes that his ancestors wound the road with potent spells to preserve it, and that it is still mostly intact. Bofri intends to travel to the Millfort, one of the three larger keeps the Dwarves built to protect the road, and ascertain how intact it is. The Millfort was built roughly two-fifths of the way along the road.

According to Dwarven records, the Staff of the Roadwarden, the traditional symbol of office for the master of the road, lies in the Millfort. Bofri wants to reclaim it, and needs brave companions to succeed.

To the Millfort

The Company will most likely start the journey somewhere in the land of the Woodmen. If they are in Woodland Hall, Bofri leads them north-east for some sixty miles through Western Mirkwood and the edge of the Heart. This short journey has a Peril Rating of 4, and produces 1d2 Journey Events.

If the companions follow the Dusky River, or paddle along it, they encounter the River-maiden named Sunshadow, who flirts with one of the more attractive male heroes. Later along the journey, if the companions encounter danger, then Sunshadow's sister Silverbell may appear to aid them.

If the companions take an overland route, then they may meet Geirbald Kinslayer and his brotherhood of outlaws (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 92). Approaching them in a friendly fashion allows a **DC 10 Intelligence (Traditions)** check. On a success they share news – a week ago, Geirbald and his men ambushed a band of Forest Goblins that were fleeing west. Normally when threatened, the Goblins of the forest head in the opposite direction, towards the Mountains. They must have run into something so scary that they decided to risk the Mannish lands of the west.

2

The Old Road

At the end of their journey through thick woods, the companions suddenly emerge into a leafy tunnel. "We've found it!" exclaims Bofri, and he eagerly scrabbles at the ground with a shovel until he uncovers cut stone. His fingers trace the dirt-filled runes engraved on the slab.

"Five miles east to the Millfort from this spot. Forty-five to the Beacon tower, and sixty-five west to where the Westfort once stood! This way!" He hurries off down the overgrown road to the east… and then stops dead. "What's that?" he exclaims, and points to the top of a nearby tree.

The characters see a web-wrapped bundle stuck to the upper branches. It looks like a victim of a Spider, but it's much too big to be a person.

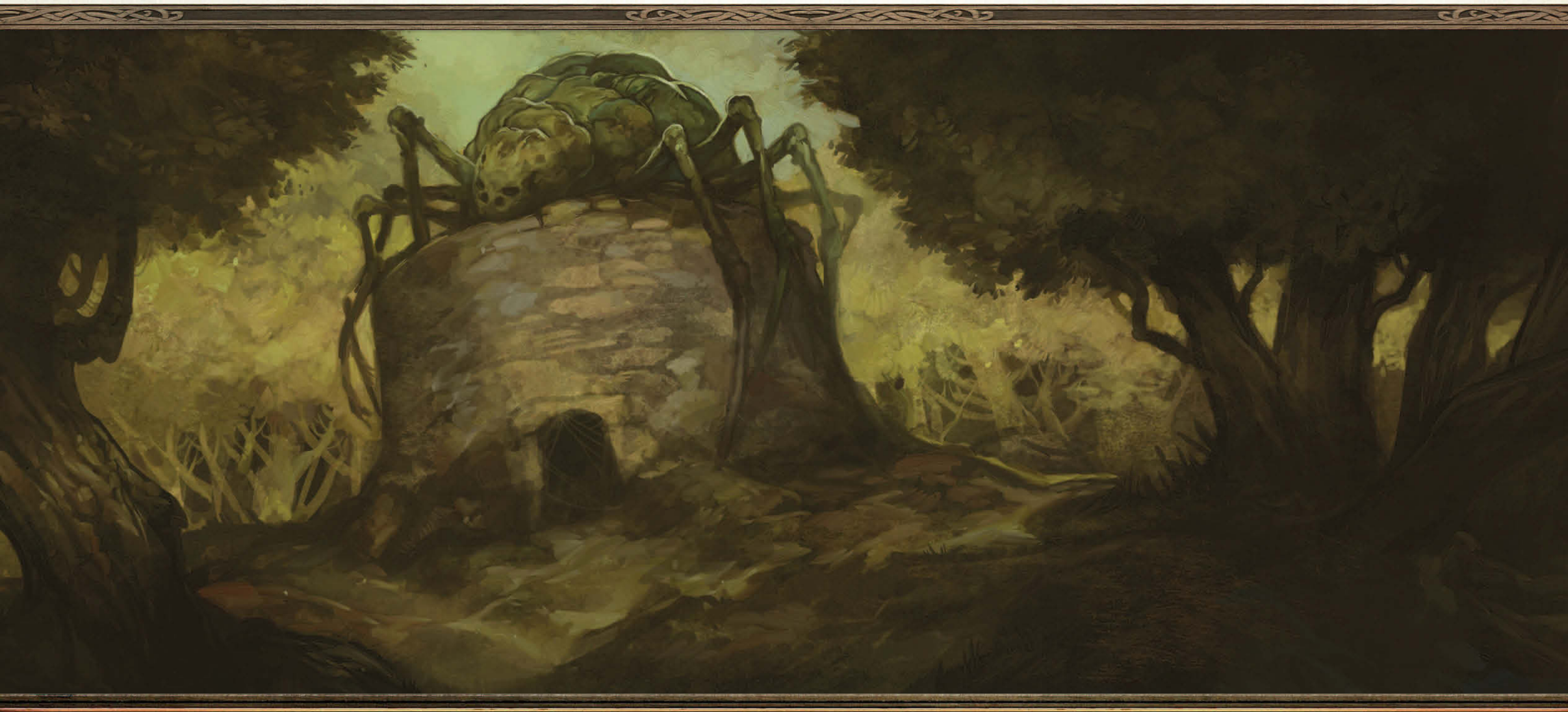
A brave hero can make a **DC 13 Strength (Athletics)** check to climb up and cut the webbing open. A gory mess tumbles down and splatters on the ground below. A companion that braves the stench and blood can make a **DC 10 Intelligence (Nature)** check to reveal that the remains are the partially consumed bodies of two large boars.

2

A Spider

The Millfort was once a Dwarven way station, a fortified coaching inn where travellers could rest in safety and recover before continuing. A forest stream flows past the back of the fortress, and a small mill wheel once turned there. Today, the mill wheel is long gone and the fort is entirely overgrown. The outer walls are still mostly intact, and the squat drum-shaped tower in the middle… has an absolutely gigantic Spider sleeping on it.

The biggest Spider any of the companions have ever seen is sprawled across the top of the tower. The monster is at least fifteen feet across, with its huge hairy legs dangling over



the edge. A companion possessing *Region-lore (Mirkwood)* or *Enemy-lore (Spiders)* may invoke the Trait to be allowed a **DC 15 Intelligence (Lore)** check: success identifies the creature as Tauler the Hunter (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 132). The monstrous Spider clearly feasted on the boars and is now sleeping off a heavy meal, or else it is very much awake and watching the companions. It's hard to tell with the glassy-eyes of Spiders...

Getting past Tauler

The Staff of the Roadwarden is somewhere inside the tower. All the company needs to do is get past the giant Spider...

- **Attacking Tauler:** Good luck! Tauler's statistics are found in the *Rhovanion Region Guide,* and he is likely a foe beyond any of them. On the off-chance that the companions manage to reduce Tauler to 60 hit points or less, he makes a great leap into the trees and vanishes, chittering in pain. Plans that involve poisoning the beast, luring it into a trap, setting it on fire or some other trickery might work, but won't easily kill Tauler. The best the companions can hope to do is drive him away.

- **Sneaking Past:** Creeping past the slumbering Tauler requires at least half the heroes to make a **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth)** check to enter the Millfort. Further checks may be required to move about the fort and another set of checks are required to sneak past Tauler on the way out. A group failure awakens the Spider.

- **Begging the Spider's Pardon:** Tauler understands the Common Speech, and can even speak a few words of it. Should a companion make a **DC 15 Intelligence (Traditions)** check with Disadvantage the Spider will let them pass; companions with one or more points of Shadow do not suffer Disadvantage, as they discover they understand better what the creature says. A gift of gemstones would result in an automatic success - Tauler loves to consume their light to see their beauty wither. Do the companions have any precious stones?

If the companions try to get past Tauler and fail, then there might still be hope – they can try fleeing or else surrender (in which case, they can try **Traditions** again). If they sneak past, but wake the Spider up while they are inside, then they must somehow escape the tower with the monster crawling around the outside of the building!

While inside the Millfort, a successful **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation)** check uncovers a cunningly hidden chest in the topmost room of the tower; inside lies the Roadwarden's Staff – which Bofri is eager to claim – alongside several crumbling leather-bound ledgers, and a smaller casket of coins and gems that total 100g worth.

YEAR'S END

This winter is very hard; all Holding Upkeep checks have a +2 modifier to their DC (checks at the Black Tarn are made at Disadvantage), and heroes cannot choose the Heal Corruption undertaking.

The Roadwarden's Staff

The magnificent staff of the roadwarden is a walking stick of Dwarf-make, with a shaft of polished wood topped with a pearl as great as a small dove's egg. Its maker engraved runes of power and protection on the wooden shaft. A hidden compartment inside the staff once contained maps of the Old Forest road, but Bofri does not know if they are still intact.

The staff might be worth up to 20 gold pieces, maybe much more if sold to Dwarves. It also has three special benefits:

- **The bearer of the staff has a +1 modifier to Embarkation and Arrival rolls (in addition to any other modifiers).**

- **Certain doors, supply caches and vaults associated with the Old Dwarf Road only open for the bearer of the staff.**

- **A Dwarf who bears the staff and is acknowledged as the Warden of the Road has Advantage on all audiences with other Dwarves.**

Restoring the Old Forest Road

Bofri's ultimate goal is to open the road to traffic once more, and charge a toll. Doing so would open trade between west and east, and perhaps attract traffic even from the lands of the South: the overland route between Dorwinion and Gondor runs too close to the gates of Mordor, especially now that Sauron has returned — opening the road would let the merchants of Dale go south on the Running River, then load their cargo onto carts and cross Mirkwood via the road (the Elf-path is no good for such trade, as it twists and winds and vanishes amid the trees).

If the companions are interested, they might join Bofri in his ambitious undertaking. Clearing the Old Forest road and rebuilding the damaged sections is a great endeavour that will take many years to complete. The deed requires the companions to dedicate at least one or more Fellowship phases for each of the following undertakings:

- The clearing of the forest.
- The recovery of the forts.
- The restoration of the road itself.
- Patrolling the woods.
- Sending messengers to attract trade.

Should the Company accomplish this great deed, they will share in the tolls collected by Bofri, giving them a valuable holding (rated as +1 initially, as traffic increases each year, it becomes a maximum of +5).

- Year 2953 -

for heroes of level 6 or 7

Events

The treachery of the River-maiden begins. The Black Tarn darkens and becomes choked with weeds. Woodmen begin to disappear and boats vanish as the corrupted River-maiden attacks those who stray too close to the water's edge.

The Werewolf of Mirkwood appears in the Bower and attacks the Elves as they make merry. If any of the companions spent the last Fellowship phase in the Woodland Realm, or have kin or holdings there, then they may too be victims of the Werewolf's rampage.

The Messenger of Mordor contacts the men of the Tyrant's Hill. If Mogdred was welcomed into the Woodmen during the folk-moot at Rhosgobel, he refuses to listen and closes his doors on the black rider. However, if Mogdred was rejected by the Woodmen, then he listens to the wraith's message, and the strength of the Tyrant's Hill is once again added to that of Dol Guldur.

In October, the Elvenking travels secretly to Rivendell, summoned by the White Council. If encountered on his way to Imladris, Thranduil pretends he is going West, to the Grey Havens. On his way home, the Elvenking barely stops along the journey, as he and his retinue of knights ride day and night until they reach the Forest Gate.

Squabbles and skirmishes continue between the Beornings and the folk of Viglund.

Saruman withdraws in Isengard in late October, after the meeting of the White Council that will prove to be the last. He has persuaded the Wise that the One Ring is lost forever, and now intends to bring his study of the Rings of Power to a more practical level...

Fengel, King of Rohan, dies after a long but unpopular rule. He was deemed a greedy and unwise king. His only son, Thengel, left him to serve Gondor. Before Thengel returns from his self-imposed exile, Fengel's cupbearer

Lamas steals a chest of gold and other treasures from Edoras and escapes on the king's favourite horse. Lamas rides north into Wilderland. He intends to spend his ill-gotten loot in Lake-town.

Turgon, the twenty-fourth Ruling Steward, dies in Gondor. False rumours claim that he took to his bed after Sauron declared, and never rose again. He is succeeded by his son Echtelion II.

Adventuring Phase: The Beast of the Forest

Angered by the Werewolf's attack on the Bower, King Thranduil dispatches his hunters. One of them, a brave knight named Orophal, tracks the Werewolf to its lair in the Mountains of Mirkwood. He is wounded in the fight, but slays the beast and then starts his journey home. On the way, he attracts an entourage of younger Elves, many of whom are Wayward Elves.

The companions hear tales of the triumphant return of the hero as they travel in the Woodland Realm. One night, they see campfires and lamps in the distance through the trees. As they investigate, they find a band of Elves feasting and celebrating beneath the stars. Gleaming lamps hang from trees, and a long white cloth laden with delicious food is laid over trestle tables. The horrible hame of the Werewolf hangs from a branch over the feast, and brave Orophal sits at a place of honour at the head of the table.

Assuming the companions approach in an appropriate way and are not enemies of the Elves, they are invited to join the feast. An inebriated Orophal greets them, then returns to retelling the tale of his battle with the Werewolf.

The fight left him wounded and exhausted, but now it is time to revel in the victory: he wields a chicken leg as a sword, with the remainder of the chicken standing in for either the Mountains of Mirkwood or the Werewolf, depending on which stage of the story he is currently drunkenly recounting.

At the feast, the companions may hear more tales of the Wayward Elves, the troubles with the Barding foresters and gossip from Thranduil's court.

The Coming of the Beast

Suddenly, Orophal points into the darkness beyond the edge of the clearing in horror. "Those eyes!" The companions see a pair of huge glowing-red eyes. Beneath them, the firelight glints off a row of wickedly sharp teeth.

"It cannot be!" says Orophal. "I killed you already". He fumbles for his sword, but he is too slow – a huge shape leaps out of the darkness and bounds across the feasting table. It crashes into Orophal, sinks its teeth into his sword-arm, then flings him far across the clearing to smash into the bole of a beech tree.

The Werewolf has returned. For an instant, as the beast stands beneath the skin hanging from the tree overhead, the companions clearly see that both creatures are identical. Orophal did kill the Werewolf, but somehow it didn't stay dead.

Few of the Elves at the feast are especially talented fighters, so it is up to the companions to face the Werewolf. Fortunately, the beast furiously turns to smash the lamps hanging from the trees, giving the characters two options: do they ready their defenses at the table (heroes that climb on the tables gain Advantage, or the tables can be turned upright to provide three-quarters cover) OR attack the Werewolf before he destroys all the lamps and plunges the clearing into pitch darkness?

If the Werewolf destroys the lamps, they must fight in darkness for 1d3+1 rounds until one of the Elves rekindles a lamp to provide dim light for the area.

The statistics for the Werewolf of Mirkwood are found on page 113 of the *Loremaster's Guide*. If reduced to 0 hit points, it abandons its current wolf-body to possess another... the heroes have earned only a brief respite.

6 After the Battle

Orophal is grievously injured. A successful **DC 15 Wisdom** (**Medicine**) check ensures that his spirit does not slip away to the Halls of Mandos. The Werewolf continues to stalk the companions as they make their way to the palace of Thranduil.

At the Halls, the companions find safety behind their magic doors. Outside, they hear the beast howling and clawing at the gates of the Elvenking's palace, but Dwarf-wrought stone wound round with Elven spells can withstand the fell strength of the Werewolf of Mirkwood. After several hours, the beast departs. Thranduil's scouts follow it through the forest, and discover that it slips away to the south-west across the Elf-path.

The Elves are confused – some wonder if Orophal lied or was mistaken when he spoke of slaying the Werewolf, others wonder if the beast has somehow spawned more of its kind. Others fear that Sauron, secure in his place of power, has created some new race of monsters to harass the Free Peoples.

Thranduil decides that more information is needed about the beast. Orophal found the beast's lair in the Mountains of Mirkwood – perhaps there are clues hidden there about the nature of the Werewolf. Orophal is too wounded to travel, but can tell the companions exactly where he found the beast's lair. Otherwise, finding it requires three **DC 15**

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Search for Answers

If the companions are spending a Fellowship phase at a location with an appropriate source of learning, be it a collection of scrolls of lore and song, a treasury of books and tablets, or a wise man or council of elders, they may choose this undertaking and research an obscure topic. You must specify the subject of your search. You may elect to make a DC 15 Intelligence (History or Lore, as appropriate) check before rolling on the following table. If you are successful, roll with Advantage. If you fail, roll with Disadvantage. If you choose not to make the check, just roll 1d20 and consult the table below:

1. Forbidden Knowledge. Your curiosity has had the best of you, and pushed you to crave secrets that were best left uncovered — gain 1 Shadow point.

2-6. Nothing Useful. You have spent days and nights pouring over dusty books and crumbling parchments or holding forth with old dotards.

7-12. Scarce Information. The Loremaster will provide at least one useful element of information about your subject.

13-15. Precious Information. The Loremaster must provide two useful elements of information about the researched subject.

16-17. A Mystery Revealed. You have uncovered something substantial — the Loremaster must provide two useful elements of information. Furthermore, once in the next Adventuring phase you can recall your time spent in the halls of wisdom to gain Inspiration.

18-19. Great Secrets. You have discovered everything that was possible to find about your subject in the place that you have been making your research. During the next Adventuring phase, the first time you fail an Intelligence check, you can use your knowledge gained here to allow a second attempt.

20. Favourable Information. You may either select A Mystery Revealed, or roll again.

successes at either **Investigation** or **Survival**. Each failed roll invites attention from the denizens of the mountains (Forest Goblins, Orcs, Spiders, Vampires or Wargs). The Peril Rating of the journey is 5 and the heroes will face 1d2 Journey Events.

7 The Lair of the Beast

Eventually, the companions come to the network of bonestrewn caves where the Werewolf makes its lair. A cruel Loremaster may add Orc sentries, lesser Hounds of Sauron or Wargs to the vicinity of the lair. Entering the dark tunnels, it seems that the Werewolf is not at home – the foul smell of rotting flesh and animal musk is strong, but not overpowering.

If they dare descend into the deepest caverns, the companions might find something strange. A **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)** check finds the shattered

Secrets of the Lamp

The making of the shining crystals at the heart of the two Lamps of Amon Lanc is lost to history. Perhaps Fëanor made them in the depths of time, or some student of his created them in homage to his master's work. The crystals were a tribute to the light of the Two Trees of Valinor as they shone in the first days of the world, bright and hopeful and unmarred.

Many long centuries later, Celebrimbor of Hollin wrought the crystals into two lamps, with the help of Ormal the Lampmaker. After the destruction of Eregion by the armies of Sauron, Ormal carried the two lamps out of the ruin. He brought them over the Misty Mountains to Amon Lanc, where King Oropher hung them in a place of honour above his gates. There the lamps hung for more than three thousand years, until the Shadow first descended on the Forest.

When Thranduil decided to abandon the naked hill to move his capital north, the lamps were escorted by a company of picked Elven warriors as one of the treasures of the Realm. On the way, they were ambushed by countless Spiders, and all were slain. The lamps were lost. Thranduil assumed that both were destroyed by the great Spiders, for it is said that the unhappy children of Ungoliant consume gems and jewels as a lesser Spider sucks the juices from its prey. In truth, none of the Spiders could endure the light of the lamps, even though they hungered for the beauty and power within.

In the end, the Spiders gave the lamps to the Necromancer, who locked them away. Sauron intended to corrupt the lamps, or at least to hide them away forever from the Elves.

When Gandalf entered Dol Guldur in the year 2063, he found one of the lamps, intact. He recognised its power, and carried it out of the dungeon with him. This lamp he entrusted to the young Woodman Balthi, who had guided him through the Forest.

Now, it is a curious thing that Gandalf never told the Elves of his discovery. He told the Woodmen to place the lamp inside a glass case, hiding its shape but letting its radiance burn forth. For fifty generations, the lamp has hung from the rafters in the Great House of Woodmentown, and only the Wizards and a few descendants of Balthi know about its true origins.

The Werewolf

In 2460, Sauron returned to Dol Guldur and sought ways to increase his power. His servants found a slumbering spirit from the Elder Days. Long ago, the Elves blasted the spirit with beams of light, wounding it and causing it to flee to the dark caverns under Mirkwood to nurse its wounds. Sauron convinced the spirit to serve him, first by threatening it with the light of the remaining lamp, and then by giving the spirit the lamp to destroy. The Werewolf was braver than the Spiders – it endured the agony of the light because its hatred was stronger.

The other lamp remains hidden in plain sight in Woodmen-town, and the glimmer of its light continues to torment the Werewolf...

remains of an ancient Elven lamp. The lamp must have been of astounding craftsmanship, and was wrought of the finest materials. A companion with *Elven-lore* or *Ancient Lore* may make a **DC 15 Intelligence (Lore)** check: a success evokes the days of Amon Lanc and the brightness of the two glorious lamps – one gold, and one silver – that once hung outside the doors of the fortress. They were made by Celebrimbor and the Wood-elf Ormal (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 88) in the depths of time.

The lamp was clearly the focus of the Werewolf's frenzied hate over many centuries. It has gnawed on the lamp, and hurled it against the walls, clawed at it, dropped it from a height, ripped it to pieces and shattered the enchanted glass that once fuelled its light.

Looking at the ruined lamp, the Company can sense that this artefact was hated by the beast as much as anything has ever been hated in all of Middle-earth.

4 Return to the Halls

If they leave the lair of the Werewolf alive, the companions can return to the Halls of the Elvenking. On their journey home, they hear the distant roaring of the Werewolf of Mirkwood, and may even glimpse the monster if they are unlucky.

Stern Loremasters may require another journey to reach the safety of the Halls; the Peril Rating and number of events are the same as the journey to the mountains.

Thranduil recognises their description of the lamp. It must surely be one of the two that once hung from the doors of Amon Lanc, but were lost long ago. He suggests the Company consult with Ormal the Lampmaker (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 88) to learn more. If the companions do so, they might learn the history of the lamp (see also Year's End below).

6 Year's End

Elven companions who have met Ormal may study with him, either choosing the Study with the Lampmaker undertaking (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 89) or by choosing the new undertaking Search for Answers (see page 33).

- Year 2954 -

For Heroes of Level 6 or 7

Events

Maghaz the Orc-captain obeys the commands of the Messenger of Mordor, and sends Orcs to reoccupy Dol Guldur, previously inhabited only by the Ringwraiths and the spirits of the dead. Maghaz himself remains at Fenbridge Castle, preferring to retain some independence instead of becoming a minion of the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur.

Orcs, Wargs and Vampires are drawn to Dol Guldur this year. Many leave their lairs in the Mountains of Mirkwood and travel south. They skirt around the Spider-haunted lands in the Heart of Mirkwood, and so enter the Woodmen settlements in the Western Eaves and along the Dusky River. The River-maidens help the Woodmen where they can, but their eldest sister intervenes and tells them to flee and hide rather than stand and fight.

Black rain falls over much of southern Mirkwood, tainted with soot and ash from Mount Doom. Where it falls, it stains the leaves black. The shadow in the south deepens. Most of the locations in Southern Mirkwood are now considered to be blighted places. The foul rain hastens the corruption of the Black Tarn. Over the year, the eastern portion of the lake is choked with strangling weeds and slime.

Two young hunters from Black Tarn Hall return from a frog-hunting expedition along the lake's perilous northeastern shore, carrying with them four handfuls of gold. They entered an ancient cairn in the forest and found there some forgotten gold. They dared only take a double handful apiece, lest they anger the ghosts that they fear live there. Despite their best efforts, the two hunters are unable to find the ruin again. Tales of gold in the wood draw some of the greedier Woodmen to explore the dangerous area on the edge of the Heart of Mirkwood. One such Woodman, a famed bowman named Hunald, disappears in the forest. No sign of him is found, and it is assumed that he has perished.

A shaft in the tin mine at Mountain Hall collapses, burying several miners. The mountain-folk blame meddling Goblins.

In Mordor, Mount Doom erupts. The earthquake is felt as far north as Rhosgobel, although there it is felt only as a slight shaking.

Adventuring Phase: The Lost Path

Since settlers came to the East Bight, there has been more traffic through the woods of the Narrows of the Forest. Travellers take shortcuts across the area instead of making the long journey around the south end or going north. While Dol Guldur was empty and silent, the paths were relatively safe, but now things have changed.

If Mogdred was rejected at the folk-moot at Rhosgobel, then it is his men who cause most of the trouble. If Mogdred is allied with the Woodmen, then the larger problem is caused by Wood-wights instead.

If the companions are allies of the Woodmen of Rhosgobel, or are known to Ceawin the Generous, then they may be asked to help find a new route across the Narrows of the Forest. If they are friends of the Woodland Realm, then King Thranduil may send them south to explore the area and determine the nature of the growing Shadow in Dol Guldur.

The Company's task is to find a path that runs from Black Tarn Hall to the East Bight. They may begin their mission at either side of the Narrows of the Forest; the encounters below assume they start at Black Tarn Hall, guests of Amaleoda the shieldmaiden; her village is located on the north-western shore of the lake, where the Dusky River enters the Black Tarn.

Crossing the Swamps

The lands around the Black Tarn have grown treacherous. The companions face a perilous march through the fens, where the soggy, muddy ground conceals hidden tree-roots and many serpents. Thick greenish fogs wrap around the trees. To find a safe path in order to start their journey, the Guide must make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)** check with Disadvantage. A failure leads to *Dark Signs and Evil Portents* (see page 167 of the *Player's Guide*) as an automatic result on the Embarkation Table. A failure with a 1 on the d20 means that the company is lost. They must wander for at least a day before the Guide can make another attempt.

While wandering in the swamps, one member of the Company sees a beautiful dark-haired woman slipping through the trees, clad in a grey corslet of armour that glitters like fish-scales. If the companions are not lost, then she simply seems to be watching them as they travel through her realm. However, if the companions are wandering aimlessly, then the woman approaches them.

She introduces herself as Duskwater (any Woodman, or a character who possesses the Trait *Region-lore (Mirkwood)*

or makes a **DC 15 Intelligence (Lore)** check, recognises this as the name of the eldest River-maiden). Duskwater offers to guide the Company through the swamps, either to Black Tarn Hall or across the swamps into the Narrows.

Duskwater is under the spell of Tyulqin the Weaver (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 134), but her offer is an honest one – she is curious, and helps the Company in order to allay suspicion. If the Company meets her, either an active or passive **Perception** check against **DC 20** (**DC 15** if the hero has the Trait *Keen-eyed*) means the companion notices that what appeared to be fish-scales on her corslet of armour is actually a lattice of thousands of fine threads, rippling like gossamer.

5 Exploring the Woods

The companions need to find a safe path through the forest, one that can be followed not only by other adventurers and travel-hardened Woodmen, but also by merchants leading baggage ponies or fat traders from Dale. This journey has a Peril Rating of 4, and will have 1d2+1 Journey Events, but making progress will require the Scouts to find a way through the forest.

To this end, the Scout must succeed in at a **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)** check each day. If the check fails, the companions haven't found a suitable route yet. On a success, they find a barely adequate path, not enough for their needs; if the Scout succeeds by 5 or more they find an unusually easy route and make progress that day, possibly triggering a Journey Event. Once only one Journey Event remains go onto the Valley of Illusion.

7 Valley of Illusion

When it is time to resolve the last Journey Event, have the Scout make an **Investigation** check. On any result, the Company comes upon what must be an old Elf-road running through the wood. Following it, they are led into a silent, high-sided valley. The forests on either side are thick with dark firs, but the valley floor is remarkably clear and smooth. This path is an ideal road through the wood. Occasionally the heroes must brush aside small spider webs, but there are no monsters.

After a few minutes' walk, the companions come to a spot where the valley branches in two. One spur goes off north, towards the Mountains of Mirkwood, where they can hear a familiar voice shouting for help. A huge Spiderweb stretches across the mouth of the valley, and caught like a fly in the web is... well, the companions see whoever they are most likely to try to save.

They might see an important patron, like Radagast or Thranduil. They might see a trusted friend, a loved one, or even a family member caught in the web. This is an illusion woven by the great Spider Tyulqin, whose evil magic has caught the Company. She is a clever huntress – whatever illusion she creates is a plausible one. She will choose a victim who could end up in a web in Mirkwood, so the companions are not going to come across the Steward of Gondor or Lobelia Sackville-Baggins trussed up in a web (howsoever much she might deserve it).

The prisoner is tightly wrapped in webs. To free the prisoner, the companions have to climb up onto the web and cut the sticky strands. At least, that's what they think they are doing – in reality, they are walking up to a thick black web and wrapping themselves in its grasping strands. Characters that are caught in the web become Restrained (Escape DC 15) but cannot make an attempt to break free until the illusion is dispelled (see *Breaking the Spell*, below). Ensorcelled heroes believe they are working to free the prisoner.

A hero who is free and unaffected by the illusion may attack the webbing in order to give another hero Advantage on their escape attempt.

Breaking the Spell 2

If a player smells a rat, allow a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check. On a success, the companion perceives that something is wrong about the situation, and can use their action to make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw. A ensorcelled hero who rolls a natural 20 on any ability check may make a saving throw (as above) to perceive the illusion as well.

Once a character sees through the illusion, he finds that he is covered in an exceedingly fine black Spider-web, so fragile and faint that he brushed through it without noticing. Further, the other members of the companions are similarly covered. A hero can use her action to break the webbing on another hero, automatically ending the illusion for them.

7

Shadow of the Spider

Once all her victims are trapped, or once the companions discover the illusion, then Tyulqin reveals herself. She lets the illusion melt away, and the characters see a huge many-eyed Spider sitting at the top of the ravine far overhead. She begins to crawl slowly down the wall. Droplets of venom drool from her fangs and hiss upon the ground.

Killing Tyulqin is virtually impossible – she flees if reduced to half her hit points or less (Loremasters might still award XP for defeating her). She recently ate, so she is slow and sleepy, moving at half her normal speed. It takes her six rounds to lazily crawl down the wall, though she will hasten if the companions try shooting her with arrows. She may also choose to Mesmerise a troublesome archer.

Once the companions are free of the illusion, they discover that the smooth, safe Elf-road was actually a tangled trap, and that they are not where they thought they are. They are now lost in the forest, and must find their way back with a successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Survival)** check. Failure means they are lost in the woods for another day, stalked by dread Tyulqin.

5

THE FAR END OF THE FOREST

Once the companions leave the Spider's realm, they find themselves in a wilderness of thorns and fir trees. The companions must plot a new journey, with a Peril Rating of 4 and 1d2 Journey Events. Once they cut their way free of the tangle of the trees, they arrive in a region of the forest where the trunks are more widely spaced. They have reached the fringes of the East Bight, a land that was once cleared by the axes of the Northmen.

The trees have since reclaimed the territory, but are not as closely packed as they once were. Soon, they begin to spot rubble and fallen stones amid the tree-roots. There was a town here, once, long ago. The air is foul-smelling and foetid, and many-legged things scuttle over the broken white stones.

As the companions pass through the area, they come upon one building that is entirely intact. It is a longhouse of wood and stone, seemingly unmarked by the passage of time. The doors are closed, but do not appear to be locked.

A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Lore)** check counsels caution, and recalls tales of the Hall of Ghosts (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 115). The door of the hall is marked with runes used by the Woodmen and their Beorning kin, and read *'O CHILD OF OAK, STAND YET AGAINST THE STORM'.*

3

The Silent Hall

If a character opens the door of the longhouse and steps through, he is trapped. The door shuts tight behind him, and no force can pry it open again. Inside, the hall is empty and dark, but the companion immediately sees a huge bearded axe-head whistling towards him!

If the companions failed to protect Ceawin from the Woodwight in *The Helm of Peace* (page 25), then the character who entered the Hall of Ghosts catches a glimpse of the chieftain of the East Bight wielding the axe, wearing the jewelled helm made by the Dwarves: the spirit haunting him goes abroad at night, wearing the lord's face (this vision in the Hall of Ghosts may encourage the Company to seek a cure for Ceawin). If the companions successfully protected Ceawin, then the attacker in the Hall of Ghosts is an esteemed ancestor of the Woodmen, stirred by Ceawin's gift.

The ghost in the hall seeks to test the courage of the companion – if the trapped hero does not attempt to dodge the blow, but tries to stop the attack by addressing the spirit or otherwise accepts the threat of a wound, then the ghost will reward him. If the character flinches or tries to dodge, the ghost's intent is murderous.

The axe blow lands on the companion according to the following stats. If the hero stands unflinching, the ghost has Advantage on the attack.

Spectral Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution** saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

If the hero stood firm, the ghost delivers a single blow and then fades away. As the spirit recedes, the companion has a clear vision of a lonely oak tree in the East Bight. Buried amid the roots of that tree is an ancient chest, containing gold and precious stones worth 100g and an iron crown, once worn by the Chieftain of the Northmen of Rhovanion.

If the hero resisted, then it makes one more attack and then fades away, and grants no vision.

Foes Near at Hand

Another challenge awaits on the edge of the forest. Someone lies in ambush: the nature of the ambushers depends on the current circumstances in Mirkwood:

- If Mogdred is an enemy of the Woodmen, then the attackers are warriors bearing the symbol of Amon Bauglir, the Tyrant's Hill. There are two Servants of Tyrant's Hill (see page 12) and one Savage Hound (see page 13) for each hero. One of the brigand women pretends to be an injured and lost traveller, and when the companions move to help her, the other brigands ambush them.
- Otherwise, the attackers are a band of Orc Soldiers (two for each hero, *Loremaster's Guide*, page 103) from Fenbridge Castle, led by a Hill-Troll (*Loremaster's Guide*, page 108). The Orcs are under orders to attack anyone passing through the Narrows of the Forest. The ambush begins with the Hill-Troll toppling a tree (+3 to hit, as a line 30 ft long and 5 ft wide, 13 (3d6+3) bludgeoning damage) on top of the company.

5 After the Journey

If the companions successfully find a safe path through the Narrows, then either Ceawin or Amaleoda rewards them with 60s each.

6 Year's End

The following winter is the worst in living memory. The DC for all Holding Upkeep checks is raised by 2, and many old and sick perish in the biting cold.

- Year 2955 -

for heroes of level 6 or 7

Events

Marsh-dwellers are seen in the Black Tarn along the eastern shore. The cryptic creatures arrive early in the spring.

If Ceawin is possessed, then the lord of the East Bight becomes even stranger. He sends several of his trusted men into exile for plotting against him. They end up joining with the outlaws of Geirbald Kinslayer (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 89).

The quarrel between the Beornings and the followers of Viglund is renewed when some of Viglund's men are attacked by an unseen bowman. They blame the Beornings; in truth, the attacker was a mischievous Elf of the woods.

The bitter winter of the last year struck Dorwinion especially hard, and many of the vineyards of that land are blighted. The coming grape harvest will be poor indeed. Thranduil's wine merchant Halbrech makes it known that he seeks to purchase wine from the southlands if none can be found in the North.

Adventuring Phase: Treacherous Waters

Ever since 2952, the River-maiden Duskwater has been in the thrall of Dol Guldur. Her treachery grows more evident this year. This adventure takes place either around the Black Tarn or anywhere along the Dusky River.

This episode can be run in one of two ways: the simplest approach is to have the adventure befall to the Company as they travel along the Dusky River on a boat. Alternatively, companions might be hired to find a missing boat, or better yet, have someone important to them (a friend, a kinsman, a lover, a child) be on that boat when it vanishes.

5 The River Bore

The characters are travelling on the dark waters of the Dusky River on a little boat, in company of some Woodmen. They are going south, in the direction of the Black Tarn. The stream is fast-flowing where it is not choked with black weeds, and the sharp-fingered branches of the trees always seem to hang down just at eye-level, but the Woodmen know this river well. It is their friend, their shield against the Spiders, and their road through the dark woods. One of the Woodmen glimpses a pale slim form in the waters, and smiles – the River-maidens are nearby, watching over the boat.

And then something strikes the boat hard from below. Cargo jolts free, poles are wrenched from hands, and everyone falls about in disarray. Suddenly, the river seems to seize the boat and carry it away downstream. Faster and faster goes the boat, as if it had grown wings. The waters whirl and churn – anyone jumping into the river would surely be swept away and likely perish.

The boat thunders downstream, moving with terrifying speed. Winds howl so loud that the passengers cannot speak, while the spray blinds them so that all they can do is hang on for dear life. Anyone on board must pass a **DC 15 Strength** (**Athletics**) check or gain a level of Exhaustion.

Suddenly, the boat plunges into the forest along one of the many narrow streams that head east into the Heart of Mirkwood. The boat smashes through branches and skips over rocks. From the river, the companions hear the sound of cackling laughter.

7 Lost in the Sea of Trees

When the boat finally stops its mad journey, the companions have no idea how far they travelled or exactly where they are. The boat has smashed its frame against the stony bottom of a shallow part of the stream, deep into a tangled part of the forest.

Only one way seems obvious, to follow the river downstream, but that is easier said than done – between marshy ground, the icy-cold water, serpents and leeches, and the tangle of trees, even following a clear route is hard. Also, that river twisted and bucked like a dying snake. There might be a more direct route back to the Western Eaves if the companions cut through the forest.

- Following the river is a journey of some 40 miles, which is at least five days travel through the densest part of Mirkwood. Such a journey has a Peril Rating of 4 and produces 1d2 Journey Events.

- The most direct route through the forest takes only three days. However, the Company's Scout must make a successful **DC 20 Intelligence** (**Investigation**) check each day if the companions are to make any progress in the right direction. Any day without progress triggers a Journey Event.

- The group is entirely without provisions. Each day, the Hunter must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** (**Survival**) check to find fish, roots and edible berries. A failure causes each hero to gain a level of Exhaustion and a point of Shadow.

Other Passengers

A cruel Loremaster may choose to inflict a few other Woodmen on the Company as travelling companions on the boat.

Baldac: A hardened hunter with little attachment to his fellow travellers. Baldac advocates leaving the weaker members of the Company behind, so that those strong enough to survive are not slowed down by them.

Widuric: A middle-aged trader and experienced boatsman, Widuric is shocked by the strange events of the day. In all his years, he has never seen anything like it. Mirkwood is dangerous, yes, but the river — the river has always been their friend.

Amaswinta: Young and brash, she dreams of being an adventurer and a shieldmaiden. She is brave, but too impulsive and quick to act.

Gudeliva: Very old for one of the folk of the Wood, Gudeliva has buried a husband, four sons and six grandchildren. All that remains to her is her daughter Amaleoda, who is one of the founders of Black Tarn Hall.

7

Tracking the Lost Boat

If the companions were not aboard the bewitched boat, then they must find the lost travellers. This means following their route up the nameless forest stream (using the rules above), finding the wreck of the boat (a **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation)** check), and then discovering that the lost travellers decided (or were forced by some horror – the companions find the tracks of some huge beast in the mud) to cut through the forest (a **DC 10 Intelligence (Riddle)** check to deduce their reasoning and then **Investigation** checks as above to retrace their steps).

5

Hungry Spiders

Being lost and hungry is the least of the dangers of Mirkwood. The Company is in the Heart of Mirkwood, and it is here that Spiders dwell.

- If the companions were on the boat, then they are ambushed by Spiders as they make their way home. There are two Attercops (the *Loremaster's Guide*, page 105) for every companion, plus one Hunter Spider (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 136) per hero.

- If the companions are searching for the missing travellers, then they find signs that the Spiders caught them and dragged them away. Searching the woods, they find the prisoners wrapped up in webs and hanging from trees. Strangely, the Spiders have not eaten a single victim.

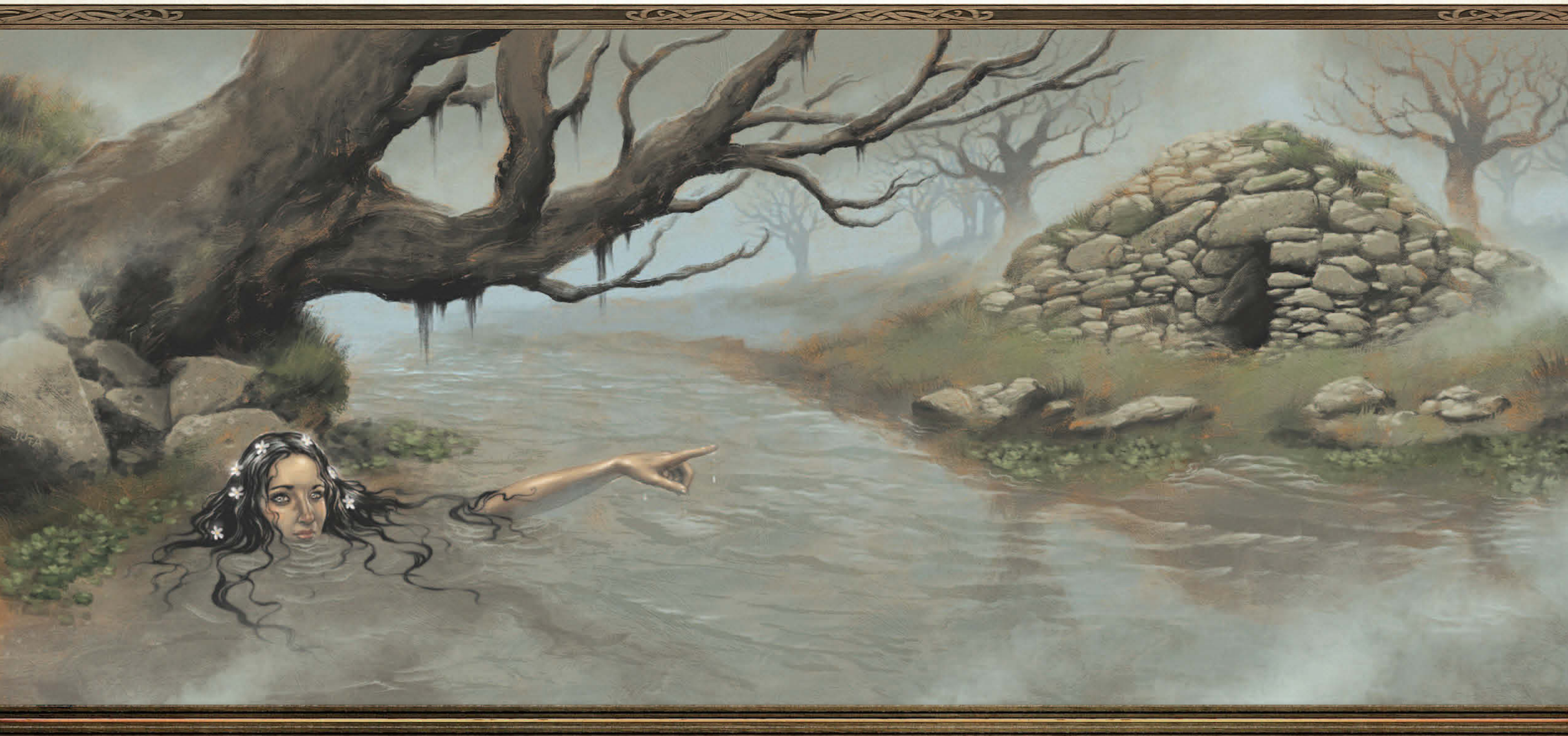
If the companions are able to listen to the Spider's chittering language, it is possible that they were able to grasp some information.

A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Riddle)** check indicates that the Spiders intended to carry their prisoners off into the Heart of Mirkwood to feed them to a bigger Spider, the "Mother of All" (heroes with one or more points of Shadow succeed at the **Riddle** roll automatically). Anyone with *Region-lore (Mirkwood)* or *Enemy-lore (Spiders)* can guess that they mean the fabled horror Sarqin (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 132).

5

Sorrow of the Maidens

After rescuing the prisoners, or after having saved themselves from the Spiders, the companions come to a marshy area – they will eventually discover they are very close to the northern shore of the Black Tarn. Here they spy misshapen creatures sneaking in the shadow of the willow trees (Marsh-dwellers, see *Rhovanion Region Guide* page 136) but the strange creatures flee instead of attacking. Then, a slim figure emerges from the waters and beckon to them. She is clearly one of the River-maidens, but she is too far away and the mists are too thick to tell which one she is.



The Maiden does not speak to the Company, but leads them through the trees to an eerie, moss-covered cairn. She points to where a hole opens on the side of the mound of stones, revealing a hollow chamber. A **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)** check finds some golden coins (at least 5g per hero), similar to the ones found by the young Woodmen hunters near the Black Tarn in 2954.

Without a word, the Maiden slips into the water and vanishes, leaving the Company to puzzle out the meaning of her cryptic actions. Is she saying that the River-maidens' mischief happened because the treasure was stolen? In truth, this is another cruel trick played by the corrupted Maiden – she had no particular interest in the treasure, but wants the Woodmen to turn on each other or blame themselves for her anger.

Year's End

In winter, news of a second Council of the North reaches the companions. Ambitious heroes may choose to exploit their renown in their area in order to gain prestige ahead of the council, by choosing the new Drumming up Support undertaking.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Drumming Up Support

Companions may return home to call in favours and meet with influential people, with the goal of gaining popularity among their neighbours so that they can share the honour and prosperity of their community with the high and mighty.

One time in the following Adventuring phase, the hero may invoke this benefit. With either lavish gifts or wise words from the elders, the hero ingratiates himself with his hosts, gaining Advantage on his Introduction check for that Audience.

Furthermore, if he is successful in the Introduction, he is considered to have earned a +2 expectation modifier for the Final Audience check.

- YEAR 2956 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 7 OR 8

Events

Messengers arrive from Lake-town, with news of the second Council of the North that will be held there in late autumn. Official representatives from all the Free Folk are expected to attend.

The Wizard Radagast spends much of the year wandering the shores of the Black Tarn. Some say that he takes the form of a trout, and goes exploring the dark waters. Others tell of how he is wooing one of the River-maidens.

King Thranduil declares that he will not personally attend the Council of the North; other courtiers vie to be named his ambassador.

The quarrels between the followers of Viglund and the followers of Beorn grows ever more bitter. Some of the folk of Woodland Hall march north to aid Beorn's men in their skirmishes with the slavers. Beorn himself is unwilling to go to war, but some of his followers are only too eager to attack the folk of the Northern Vales.

Adventuring Phase: Murder in Lake-town

This adventure takes place outside Mirkwood, in the town of Esgaroth. The first Council of the North took place in Dale ten years ago, in 2946. Held on the occasion of the first Gathering of Five Armies, the great feast celebrating the victory at the eponymous battle, the meeting saw the forging of alliances and friendship between the folk of the North. Now, those bonds are being tested.

The second council is called in Lake-town in the last days of November. The meeting has been moved from Dale at the request of King Bard. He fears that if the council is again held in his halls, others will claim that he is trying to assert his authority over the North, instead of being counted as an equal to the other leaders.

King Bard in 2956

At the age of 45, Bard is considered a wise ruler, loyal to allies and generous to friends. He is very ambitious, as he sees the refounding of a wider kingdom of the North as Dale's manifest destiny. Fifteen years after the death of Smaug, the king still holds excellent relations with the Kingdom under the Mountain, as the economies of Erebor and Dale are deeply interconnected - and last but not least, Bard considers Dáin Ironfoot as a personal friend. There is friendship also between King Bard and King Thranduil, but this sentiment is weakening on Bard's part, as the memory of the Battle of Five Armies grows dim (even if the Elvenking shows less and less interest in the dealings of Men and Dwarves). Bard's rule is recognised in some measure in nearby Esgaroth, especially since Bard's marriage with Una of Dorwinion.

King Bard is a stern, practical man, still very tied to his previous life as a captain. Held by many to be grim and sometimes proud, he is universally considered to be forthright and true to his word. His queen, Una of Dorwinion, has given him a son, Bain, who is seven years old in 2956. Bard holds court in the Royal Palace of Dale for the most part of the year, when he is not visiting the nearby realms of Dwarves and Elves.

When in Dale, he leaves his palace often to hunt in the lands west of the city. He does so in the company of his closest counsellors, a handful of nobles who once served in his company of archers. This group of advisers keep the king informed about all matters, and help him with the courtly activities, often sitting in council in his stead when matters of lesser importance are at hand.

When heroes demand an audience with the King, it is most likely that they will be met by one of his advisors instead. A counsellor might prove more difficult to impress than the King himself, as the increasing wealth and power of these courtiers is pushing them to suspect all newcomers — making an enemy out of any one of them would be a bad idea, as Bard treasures their friendship and opinion above any other consideration.

If encountered face to face, King Bard appears as a man wise beyond his age. He is quick to recognise the worth of an individual, and easily befriends any Northman showing a daring temperament and an interest in military endeavours. By 2956, Bard is still actively trying to strengthen his realm and encourages all adventurers to come to Dale. He is ready to reward their deeds and use them as an example to his people.

GATHERING CLOUDS

King Bard of Dale announces that he will speak for the Bardings, King Dáin will represent the Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain and the Master of Lake-town will stand for the Men of the Lake.

Beorn also attends in person - it is the first time he has been east of the forest since the Battle of Five Armies. Messengers sent long ago asked for envoys from both the Woodland Realm and the Woodmen, but their envoys are in question (see *Companions as Envoys*, overleaf). There is only one envoy for each of the peoples of Rhovanion, and only envoys may vote. Representatives from other folk are welcome as well, the council is willing to listen to the wisdom of Minas Tirith, or of the Dúnedain (or even practical advice from the Shire), but ultimately the folk of Wilderland must chart their own course.

Radagast's absence will be noted at the Council of the North. He remains by the Black Tarn, spending long hours staring out over the murky waters. Gandalf the Grey does not attend either – at least, not officially. He does not sit on the council or appear in public, but some say the old man is at work behind the scenes, giving counsel to the various lords and nobles of the North.

Companions as Envoys

Thranduil the Elvenking won't be present at the council, so there's room for a companion to be chosen as the envoy of the Woodland Realm. If no Elf in the Company volunteers, the King selects an emissary. If Ruithel is still alive and the Wayward Elves' influence is unchecked, then Thranduil sends her to demand that the human trespass in the Woodland Realm ceases; if Ruithel is dead or if she is not aligned with the Wayward Elves, he sends his son Legolas Greenleaf.

The envoy of the Woodmen is elected by the Houses at a folk-moot in Woodmen-town at Midsummer. Ingomer of Woodland Hall chooses not to go, and Fridwald of Woodmen-town agrees that a younger candidate is needed. If Mogdred is part of the Woodmen he stands for the position, but his choice is not supported by many at the folk-moot and a companion might challenge him and be elected in his place. Ceawin of the East Bight does not propose himself as a candidate, but goes to the council as a representative of his own folk. If neither Mogdred or a companion stand for the position, a Woodman healer named Gailar goes as the envoy of the Wood.

The Council at Lake-town

The Council of the North lasts for five days, starting from the 25th of November. At this time, Esgaroth is crowded with merchants, traders and peasants from the neighbouring lands who come to the city for the end of the harvest season.

The envoys sent to the Council of the North meet every day at the Town-hall. Some of the meetings are held in the Justice Room, the private chamber at the west end of the building, but others are open to petitioners and messengers in the larger main hall.

The news of the coming of Beorn, the fabled skinchanger, the killer of Bolg son of Azog, has spread like fire through all the town, and a crowd assembles every morning outside the hall. But the real source of wonder for the folk of Laketown quickly becomes fair Una, the Queen of Dale; the streets and quays of the Town-hall's quarter are thronged by men, women and children who sing songs to praise her beauty and grace. Even the envoys of the Elvenking cannot escape her exotic charm, and the fascination of her deep, dark eyes and dusky complexion.

Bright Days, Dark Words

Unfortunately, the council doesn't proceed as joyously: weighty topics are discussed, and every issue is rehashed and debated over and over, but soon shadows of fear and doubt seem to take hold of many speakers, especially during the meetings held in the private chamber. The two strongest voices – King Bard and King Dáin – are focused on rebuilding their own kingdoms and are unwilling to take an inspiring lead. Unless the heroes speak up, the council accomplishes little.

Matters discussed in the great hall include:

- **The quarrel between the Viglundings and the Beornings:** None of the Free Folk have any liking for Viglund, and some argue that an alliance of the council members could crush the cruel slaver. King Bard points out that Mirkwood lies between Dale and Viglund's land, and that all paths around the forest are perilous for an army. In the end, Beorn cuts the discussion short – he will not have killing in his name without due cause. If Viglund provokes him again, then he will act.

  Beorn, Bard and Dáin all vote against sending an army against Viglund. Some whisper that Beorn is growing old and lazy and wonder what will happen when he is gone.

- **Trade in the North:** Dáin, Bard and the Master of Laketown spend many hours discussing trade. Previously, the Woodmen and Beornings had little part of such discussions, but now the Beornings control the crossings of the Anduin and the folk of the East Bight help feed Lake-town and Dale. King Bard says that the fertility and growing wealth of the Dalelands shall bring prosperity to all, if they can defend it. He speaks of threats from the East, and the growing menace of banditry. He ends with a speech inviting folk of good character to come to the Dalelands, where there is plenty of farmland and a great need of strong arms.

During this portion of the council, there are many votes taken, each on a particular aspect of the trade agreements. If you wish to track the success of one folk's ability to secure good terms, you could resolve this with such a vote... the three leaders of Mountain, Dale and Lake are on one side of the issue, and those of the Vales are on the other (see Influencing Envoys*).*

As Bard speaks, some Woodmen mutter about leaving the gloomy forest for the pleasant fields of the Dalelands.

- **The felling of timber in the Woodland Realm:** The Elves raise the problem of Men trespassing in the eastern parts of the Woodland Realm and felling trees. The men of Dale counter that there are no other trees within many miles of the Lonely Mountain because of the Desolation of the Dragon. Some suggest a compromise wherein the Elves show the foresters which trees are to be felled; others say that the Men of Dale should buy all their timber from the Elves at Lake-town but the folk of Dale say that they should not have to pay to harvest trees that are, in their eyes, free for all to take.

  On the idea of Elven escorts for the forresters, Bard and the Master are against, and Dáin abstains. Regarding buying lumber from Lake-town, the Master is for (as well as the Elven envoy if not a companion) and Dáin is again neutral.

- **The settlements in the East Bight:** If Ceawin was rejected by the Woodmen, then the council raises the question of the new settlements. Should they trust this new lord?

  Bard and the Master vote yes, but Beorn and Dáin counsel caution. If the council is swayed to accept Ceawin then the Master will propose adding the lord to the council during the closed-door sessions in the Justice Hall (see below).

Influencing Envoys

Much debate is had before any decisions are made at the council and it is possible to sway the thoughts of the envoys. Before the final vote is cast on an issue, a hero may elect to influence one envoy.

Using the Cultural Attitudes table on page 192 of the *Player's Guide*, determine the attitude of the envoy toward the hero. Then use the table below to determine the DC of the attribute check. Only a single attempt to influence each envoy may be made.

- Favourable: DC 10
- Friendly: DC 12
- Neutral: DC 14
- Unknown: DC 16
- Askance: DC 18
- Mistrustful: DC 20

Private Concerns

Other topics are discussed in private in the Justice Room:

- **Expanding the Council:** The Master of Lake-town raises the suggestion of expanding the council, perhaps by offering a place to other Northman nobles. The matter is debated without conclusion.

  The other members of the council are cautious. Only effort to sway most of the envoys will secure a new admission to the group.

- **Dol Guldur:** The growing Shadow in the south cannot be denied. King Dáin asks where the Wizards are, for such matters are in their purview. The council decides to send a message to Radagast and ask for his advice. After word from Saruman arrives, they extend the same request to him and Gandalf.

  The heroes might volunteer to deliver these messages.

- **Rumours from the South:** The matter of Sauron is briefly discussed. Only the Elves remember the Last Alliance as anything other than ancient legend. For the Men and Dwarves, Mordor is a distant rumour and the Dark Lord is a bugbear from children's stories.

  Elves may try to make the mortals understand the threat posed by Sauron, but it is hard for any Man to grasp a menace that seems to belong to myth. A cynical councillor from Esgaroth interjects abruptly, "Sauron is immortal, like the Elves. What good does it to do us to meddle in the affairs of immortals?"

MESSENGERS AND PETITIONERS

Several others come before the council, hoping that the great lords will aid them in their goals:

- **Mogdred:** Whether or not he is part of the Woodmen, Mogdred approaches the council with a proposal. If the Old Forest Road was to be rebuilt, it would greatly strengthen the North. His folk have the strength and numbers to help Bofri the Dwarf rebuild it.

  None of the other lords know of any reason to oppose Mogdred's assistance. If approved, his aid allows the road to be reopened within ten years.

- **Frár the Dwarf:** Frár the Beardless (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 22) addresses the council, asking for help reclaiming the Greydelve. Everyone – even Dáin – counsels patience. The armies of the North are not strong enough to countenance a war against the Orcs.

  Fighting an unprovoked war is unpopular and the heroes are unlikely to sway any leaders to publicly support Frár. Privately, the Dwarf may ask the heroes for their aid, see **The Greydelve** *on page 77.*

- **Messengers from afar:** Travellers speak to the council, talking of new Orc armies breeding under Mount Gundabad, of Wargs prowling the Vales of Anduin, and of strangers coming out of the East in ever greater numbers.

  There are no votes on such distant concerns, but the heroes will note that the leaders of the Free Peoples are concerned by such evil rumours.

- **Drustan of Isengard:** On the last day of the council, a messenger arrives on a magnificent white horse. He is a swarthy Man with long, black hair, in his thirties. He carries a long spear with a sharp bronze head and wears clothing of superior make under a travelling cloak; a large key jangles at his waist.

  He does not bow, but haughtily addresses the assembled kings as equals, speaking in a strange accent. "I am Drustan, messenger of Saruman the White. I come to you now with a message of hope from the wisest of the Wise."

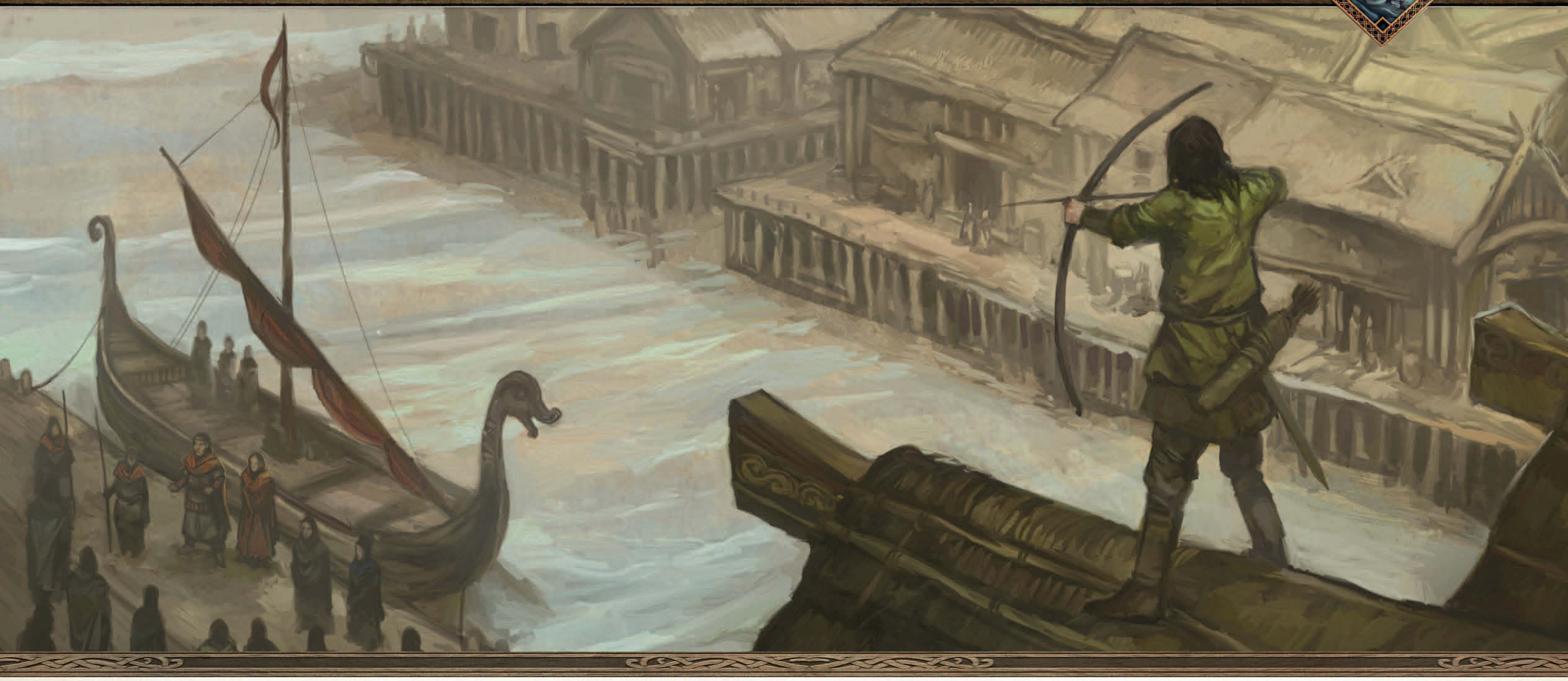
  Drustan is a Man from a land in the south called Dunland, now serving the White Wizard. He addresses the council in closed session, saying that Saruman will soon come to Mirkwood to study Dol Guldur. For the next three years, the White Wizard will reside in Rhosgobel with his brother Radagast, and any who wish to learn of the ways of the Enemy may learn from him...

THE ASSASSIN

An assassin has come to Lake-town to kill King Bard. The culprit is Hunald, a Woodman who disappeared in Mirkwood in 2954 while searching for treasure. He is a master bowman, and carries a quiver holding three arrows whose heads were forged in Angmar. His plan is to climb the roof of a warehouse in the Shipyards' district, to get a view on the market-pool where King Bard and his retinue will board his royal boat for the journey back to Dale.

Hunald is not completely in control of himself - in Mirkwood he encountered the Messenger of Mordor who put the *Shadow of Fear* upon him (see page 128), and sent him to Esgaroth on this murderous mission.

The companions may get a chance to stop Hunald if anyone in the group shows a concern for the security of the emissaries sent to the city for the Council of the North. Companions who keep an eye open on unusual occurrences (and who are especially *Wary*, for example) might become suspicious of a Woodman hunter who drinks alone in an inn in Esgaroth one or two evenings before the end of the council.



HUNALD, SPELLBOUND ASSASSIN

Medium Human

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Armour Class 16 (Leather Corslet)
Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)
Speed 30 ft

Condition Immunities Charmed, Frightened
Damage Immunities Psychic
Skills Perception +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Westron
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ambush. During his first turn, Hunald has Advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn.

Ensorcelled. Hunald has been dominated by the will of the Nazgûl, and no words will cause him to stray from his mission (reflected in Condition Immunities, above).

Actions

Multiattack. Hunald makes three attacks with either his broadsword or great bow.

Broadsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) slashing damage.

Great Bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage. If Hunald uses one of his arrows from Angmar, it does an additional 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

A TRAGIC DEATH

If Hunald is not exposed before, the assassin will carry out his plan. He takes position on the roof of the warehouse he chose the day before, and when Bard and Queen Una stop on the quay to address the crowd that gathered to bid the royal couple farewell, the archer stands up, bends his bow and quickly send three arrows flying, the last leaving the string before the first finds its target.

What follows is complete chaos - the assembled crowd witness in dismay as Bard is hit on the shoulder by the first arrow and Queen Una turns to shield her beloved husband and is pierced by the other two black darts. The bodyguards of the King close around the couple, while six Royal Archers send a hail of arrows in the direction of the attack - but it's too late, Hunald has disappeared from sight. The body of the archer is found some time later - he threw himself into the cold waters of the Long Lake immediately after the attack.

When the town guard finally succeeds in placating the crowd and containing the tumult, the full horror of the truth emerges: King Bard is not grievously wounded and will recover quickly, but the Queen is dead.

Examining the black darts shot at the royal couple identifies them as the work of Angmar of old (the origin is clear to a hero with *Dark Knowledge*, or anyone who makes a **DC 10 Intelligence (Shadow-lore)** check). If this piece of information spreads, it immediately raises the suspicion among the common folk that the assassin was hired by the Elves, because of the recent disputes between the Woodland Realm and Dale ("*Who could have provided such a terrible and ancient weapon if not Elves!*").

7

Year's End

Despair, rumour and suspicion about the assassination of Queen Una reign in Dale and Lake-town all winter. King Bard mourns his wife by refusing to see anyone but his closest counsellors. This winter is again harsh and cold, and wolves prowl even at the gates of Woodmen-town. The DC for all Holding Upkeep checks is raised by 2.

- YEAR 2957 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 7 OR 8

Events

Saruman the Wise takes up residence in Rhosgobel for a time. He dwells not with his fellow Wizard, but in a cottage within the tall hedge protecting the town. His servant, Drustan, is never far away, and three tall, dark-eyed Men, seemingly belonging to the same southern folk, help the Dunlending with the daily chores. During the Fellowship phases of this year (not only the one at Year's End), companions at Rhosgobel may confer with Saruman, gaining the advantages coming with the associated undertaking (see *Confer with Saruman*, page 53).

The arrival of Saruman snaps Radagast out of his gloomy reverie, and the Brown Wizard is once again seen coming and going in and around Rhosgobel, always announced and followed by flocks of excited birds. He is still not in his best shape, though, and it is about at this time that the once powerful and determined Wizard loses the respect of Saruman.

After several years of relative peace, the howl of the Werewolf is heard along the East Bight.

The Messenger of Mordor and the Ghost of the Forest return to Dol Guldur and consult with the Lieutenant. The Messenger then rides to Mordor to seek new orders from their dark master, while the Ghost is sent to haunt the forest in the vicinity of Rhosgobel, to spy on the Woodmen. All three fear the presence of the White Wizard in Mirkwood. On his way south, the Messenger of Mordor rides through the East Bight, awakening more Wood-wights as he goes. If Ceawin is in the thrall of the Wights, then he meets with the Messenger of Mordor by night.

Adventuring Phase: The Siege of Black Tarn Hall

This adventure determines the fate of Black Tarn Hall. If the companions are unable to save the village, it is abandoned forever and plays no further part in the Campaign.

What is the state of the village of Amaleoda at this stage of the campaign? Is it a small collection of muddy shacks, or has it become a stronghold of the Woodmen? Does the shieldmaiden rule from a sturdy longhouse, or is the village still unfortified? Are there only a few surly fisherfolk living here, or have their numbers grown? What of their allies – are they friendly with the Men of the Tyrant's Hill? Do they trade with the East Bight? Or do they stand alone and friendless?

There are many possible reasons for the company to be in Black Tarn Hall. Woodmen heroes may be there to trade or to visit relatives. Companions working for a patron may be on their way back from a scouting mission in the vicinity of Dol Guldur. The characters might be searching for the treasure of the Black Tarn, or looking for the advice of Radagast.

Choking Weeds and Yelling Goblins

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The first threat to the village comes in early summer, in the form of fast-growing weeds. They appear almost overnight, sprouting with unnatural quickness along the shoreline and wrapping themselves around the small boats used by the Woodmen. Paths used by the Woodmen become infested with Gallows-weed (see *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 124) and travel becomes even more dangerous. In a span of a week or so, most of the boats are so engulfed by the weeds that they cannot be used, and the air by the lakeside becomes unwholesome, as the weeds release a sick stench as they dry in the sun.

The Woodmen have only a few days to contemplate this strange development, when news reach Amaleoda of a worse turn of events. Hunters return from the woods to the south and east of the village, bringing tidings of an infestation of Forest Goblins! The trees literally crawl with the nasty critters, and their presence has deserted the area of all animals. Something must have driven the otherwise craven creatures out of their holes in the south.

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A Siege

The stinking vapours rising from the lake and the incessant sound of the bleating Goblin-horns echoing in the surrounding woods make the situation very clear for the inhabitants of Black Tarn Hall. With the lake and river choked by noxious weeds and the woods infested by Goblins and Gallows-weed, the Woodmen can't catch the fish and game they need to sustain themselves. It won't be long before the Woodmen start to suffer from hunger.

The village has some fortune left to it – the Orcs cannot abide sunlight, and the village has been built in the open ground near the lake, without trees to shade it. But soon the Goblins will try the defences of the village and attack it at night.

Amaleoda asks the companions for counsel; the current situation cannot be sustained for long. How can the Woodmen try to free the woods of the threat of the Goblins? Should she remain to hold the village while the companions go to find help? And if they go for allies, where do they go? Rhosgobel is close by, but there are few warriors there. Woodmen-town is populous, and if the companions take the river it is a faster road – but can they find help in time? Finally, the infested woods stand between Black Tarn Hall and the Tyrant's Hill, but if they could get help from Mogdred, together they could reasonably try to get rid of the Forest Goblins.

All solutions seem equally difficult. What will the companions suggest?

7

The River-maiden Uncloaked

Two days after the beginning of the 'siege' of Black Tarn Hall, a pale mist rises from the waters of the lake. In the mid-afternoon, a woman emerges from it and walks into the village. Her beauty is heart-breaking, but cold, like a waterfall frozen by a hard winter. Her eyes gleam with a strange malice, and she wears a rippling corslet of shining armour.

"Children of the wood, children of my blood," she says, "long have you dwelt in the care of me and my sisters. Long have we been friends. Listen now – against the coming darkness there can be no victory. I shall protect you – follow me, and I will lead you to a place of safety!"

A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Insight)** check alerts the companions that she is lying, if they have not already realised that Duskwater is corrupt.

If the companions do not speak up against the River-maiden, then the folk of Black Tarn Hall listen to her, driven by their doubts and fears. The River-maiden leads them into the mists... and they are never seen again. (If the companions are foolish enough to follow the River-maiden, then they are ambushed by Orcs in the mist.)

Convincing the villagers to reject the River-maiden requires decisive action from the companions. Checks are at **DC 15** (**10** if the heroes have proof of her treachery) and each hero can attempt one **Intimidation, Persuasion, Riddle**, or **Traditions** check. If half or more are successful, the villagers turn their backs on the River-maiden.

If her offer is rejected, the Maiden laughs cruelly. She looks at Amaleoda with her frozen eyes. "So be it. I will watch as you and those who are so foolish to follow you slowly starve. Then, one day, I'll come to collect your bones, to bring them to those who wait at the bottom of the lake."

She vanishes, and suddenly a thick fog rolls in off the Black Tarn. The weak light of the sun cannot penetrate the grey mists. Each hero must spend Inspiration or become Miserable as the villagers despair.

6

The Raids Begin

Five days into the siege, the Goblins start to encroach the village, slowly moving through the canopy of the encircling woods. The Orc-kind of Mirkwood are not disciplined enough to attempt a full-fledged assault, so they will come at night in gangs, in ragged war-bands, in twos and threes, some already wounded and angry as a consequence of an encounter with Spiders. They do not expect resistance at first, so they attack recklessly, eager for bloodshed.

The Loremaster should stage a fight based on what the players decided to do so far. For example, Goblins may crash through the door of the hall or cottage they are sleeping in, or the companions may encounter enemies along the streets of the village, as the monsters revel in the destruction of everything in their sight. Most opponents are Forest Goblins (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 134), but a very small contingent of Mordor-Orcs (Black Uruks and Messengers of Lugbúrz — *Loremaster's Guide*, page 100) has come to reinforce their ranks. Marsh-dwellers lurk in the distance (see *An Invisible Hand*, below).

The first night of raids is won as soon as the companions kill at least two enemies each. The Enemy clamber back into the shadow of the forest, sounding the retreat on their war-horns. But this was just the first night of raids; more attacks will follow, every night claiming more lives.

An Invisible Hand

The assault on Black Tarn Hall was provoked by one of the three Nazgûl of Mirkwood, the Ghost of the Forest. It is to do his bidding that the Forest Goblins have left their lairs and have come to infest the woods surrounding Black Tarn Hall. Only the terror they feel for the Ringwraith overcomes the Goblins' natural fear of becoming food for the Spiders of Mirkwood. Should the Ghost of the Forest relent his grip on the Goblins, they would immediately flee back to their caves under Dol Guldur.

To avoid letting his control of the Orcs slip away, the Ghost of the Forest has chosen to haunt the moss-covered cairn that emerges out of the marshy ground, near the north-eastern shore of the lake. Here, a group of Marsh-dwellers (see the *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 136) have been hiding among the willow-trees since they arrived there in 2955.

The companions may become aware of the terrifying presence of the Ghost of the Forest if they investigate the coming and going of the Marsh-dwellers. In fact, the horrid creatures may be spied as they lurk at the fringe of every fight, waiting for a chance to steal corpses for their cooking-pots.

Should the companions follow the Marsh-dwellers, they will discover that the cannibalistic creatures have carried a number of victims to the cairn (unless the Loremaster wants to be particularly nasty, these are all Goblins and Orcs). If they have been to the cairn before, the heroes find the place to be even more desolate than before: a lingering sense of terror makes the air thick and barely breathable, and no creatures of the wild can be spied or heard in the vicinity.

At least one among the unfortunate guests of the Marshdwellers is still alive, and very keen at not being eaten! It is a Messenger of Lugbúrz, an Orc of Mordor, come to Mirkwood all the way from the South. He complains loudly about his miserable fate, and perceiving the dark presence of the Ghost of the Forest he addresses him directly, pleading for his life.

"Help me! I know you are here! You are one of them, you can flay the skin off these corpse-eating buggers! Shrieker! Nazgûl! Free me, please!"

Obedient to the will of his master who doesn't want to reveal the true power of his most trusted servants yet, the Ghost of the Forest ignores the request. Overlooking the presence of the companions is another matter entirely...

The Ringwraith can deal with the companions even while Unclad and Invisible (see the stats for the Nazgûl, page 131). He won't communicate with the heroes in any way, but will strike at them with his **Black Breath** and **Thing of Terror** abilities so that the heroes are weakened and vulnerable to the attacks of a group of Marsh-dwellers (at least one of the creatures for every companion).

Once at least two heroes have been made Stunned or Unconscious, the Ghost disappears into the forest, to continue his malice elsewhere.

Saving the Village

To save the village, the Company must act quickly. Soon the Woodmen will be defeated by the double onslaught of bloodshed and hunger, and will start to leave Black Tarn Hall to find refuge elsewhere. Amaleoda begs the heroes to go for aid... she will stay and defend the hall. The characters must choose what to do.

If they elect to stay, the raids continue, now reinforced by the Marsh-dwellers and the Ghost of the Forest. There is nothing but a hopeless (yet valiant) stand against darkness and death.

If they are get help, they must sneak past the orc picket around the village. Each hero must make three **DC 13** skill checks. These are usually **Dexterity (Stealth)** but some could be **Strength (Athletics)** to climb trees, or **Intelligence** (**Investigation** or **Nature**) to find better paths.

The heroes can gain Advantage on these checks by setting up diversions or other clever stratagems. If more than half the rolls are failed, the company has been spotted... they are attacked by a group of Forest Goblins (two for every hero) and an Orc Chieftain with a red eye emblazoned on its armour (see page 103 of the *Loremaster's Guide*). If they succeed or defeat the enemy, they can then go for help:

- The nearest settlement is Rhosgobel. The heroes can reach it with three days of regular travel (with 1 Journey Event and a Peril Rating of 3) or in two days if they do a Forced March (see *Wilderland Adventures*, page 55). See *Wizards' Counsel*, below.
- They might recover a boat from the banks of the Dusky River and take it to Woodmen-town. This takes about six days (1d2 Journey Events, Peril Rating 3), or three days if they travel by day and night (a Forced March, as above). The Goblins do not have boats and the Nazgûl will not chase them along the flowing river. See *To Woodmen-town*, below.
- An unlikely choice is for the heroes to turn south and head for Amon Bauglir. It takes seven days (1d2 Journey Events, Peril Rating 4) through thick woodland to reach the fortress, or four days if they do a Forced March (as above). See *The Tyrant's Hill*, below.

Wizards' Counsel

5

If the companions successfully make their way to Rhosgobel, they may try to convince Saruman the Wise to aid them. Radagast is eager to go, even if what the companions say of Duskwater troubles him visibly, but the White Wizard is his superior in the order and he does not dare act without his permission. Judging from what the companions say, Saruman fears that the village is already lost, and that it would be better to stay close to the protection offered by the Lamp of Balthi. A dark tide is coming, he says, and it is better to prepare a few fortresses of Men rather than try to save every outpost. If the heroes accept the wisdom of the White Wizard, Amaleoda dies defending Black Tarn Hall and it is burned to the ground.

His reaction is very different should the companions provide proof of the presence of a Ringwraith in Mirkwood. In that case, the White Wizard immediately commands the companions to lead him to where the wraith was perceived last. A light is set blazing in the dark eyes of Saruman, and he doesn't waste any more time but immediately calls for Drustan and his men. Saruman then urges Radagast to stay behind in Rhosgobel, and leaves with the companions in haste (See *Saruman Revealed in Wrath*, overleaf).

To Woodmen-town

5

Once the heroes reach Woodmen-town they are sure to find there enough warriors to face the threat of the Forest Goblins. The Woodmen have long been enemies of Dol Guldur, and word of Orcs may bring every fighting-man and shieldmaiden to the river's edge: a well-addressed speech has every available boat take to the river in a day, while a long throng of warriors heads south on the western shore of the Dusky River.

But no army can move through Mirkwood with haste and it will take ten days for the host of the Woodmen to reach the Black Tarn. By the time the Woodmen reach the village, the Goblins have set fire to the longhouse of Amaleoda, and the valiant shieldmaiden has lost her life in a desperate last stand to defend her folk.

The Tyrant's Hill

5

If Mogdred is an ally of the Woodmen, then he sends aid as soon as the companions tell him of the siege. He also has his men find the captain of his border guard and has him whipped to death as punishment for failing to spot the advancing Goblins. This may produce Anguish (see page 181 of the *Player's Guide*) in the heroes.

Strangely, the Orcs learn of Mogdred's march long in advance, and fall back immediately instead of giving him battle... almost as if they were warned. Mogdred is praised for saving Black Tarn Hall, as the Goblins break their siege before they can burn the longhouse of Amaleoda, but he does it without inflicting any damage on the forces of Dol Guldur.

7

Saruman Revealed in Wrath

Never in their life have the companions have seen a Wizard prepare for such a confrontation - as they move to meet the Ghost of the Forest, Saruman seems oblivious to anything and anyone; he rapidly advances across any terrain with sure strides and never ceases to speak arcane words and ancient rhymes in a low voice.

Whatever the distance separating the Company from the bog where the haunted ruins rise, the journey appears to take only minutes - when the heroes finally snap out of their trance, they find themselves along the shore of the Black Tarn, facing a group of slavering Marsh-dwellers. Saruman is still among the companions, and seems to stand above them like a tall pillar of white stone.

The Voice of Saruman suddenly resounds within their heads - distant, yet clear and comforting, like the sound of the ocean resonating inside a conch shell.

"Fight now, my worthy friends! And pray that I didn't come too late to face this ruin. A shadow has come that is beyond the strength of the mind and body of any of you."

A moment, and then Saruman is gone with a white flash; the Marsh-dwellers yell covering their eyes - the light to them was as blinding as the stroke of lightning. The fight will start with the creatures being Surprised and the heroes have Advantage on their initiative rolls. There are two Marsh-dwellers for every companion.

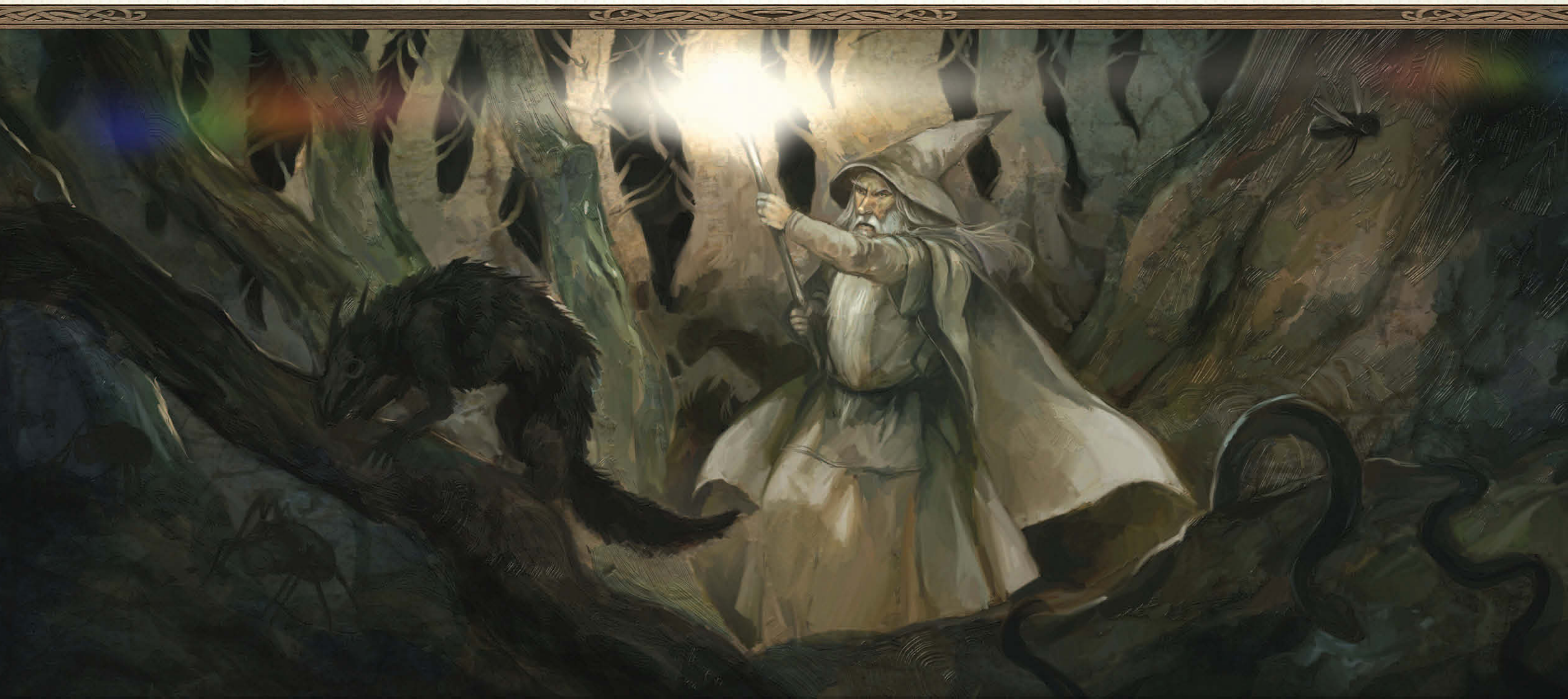
Should the heroes prevail against the dangerous swamp creatures, they will discover that Saruman has driven away the darkness and what generated it. The Ghost of the Forest has fled before the power unleashed by the White Wizard, and the host of Forest Goblins has dispersed to the four winds. Even the Marsh-dwellers seem to have retreated to where they came from. Peace returns to Black Tarn Hall.

Saruman remains a guest of Amaleoda for the following three days. For the length of his residence, Drustan and his men never cease to search the area, concentrating their efforts around the marshy grounds along the north shore of the lake, where the cairn is located. Finally, the Wizard leaves to return to Rhosgobel.

7

Year's End

As stated previously under the Events section for the current year, companions at Rhosgobel may confer with Saruman, but meeting the White Wizard may have its side effects...



A company who meets Saruman is enchanted by his wisdom and nobility and **must** take him as a patron. Saruman communicates with his followers mainly through Drustan, his messenger. He asks little of his followers, save that they report any strange events or rumours to him: during a Fellowship phase, a companion in the same location of Saruman or Drustan may choose the Meet Patron undertaking to deliver important information to the Wizard and gain Inspiration in return (the Loremaster determines if the information the companions deliver is deemed important by the Wizard or not; anything concerning Gandalf is important, for example).

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Confer with Saruman

When companions are spending a Fellowship phase in a location where he can be met, they may go and listen to the words of Saruman the White, great among the Wise of Middle-earth.

A companion who has spent a Fellowship phase conferring with Saruman can make a DC 10 Intelligence (History or Lore) check. On a success, the hero gains two Counsel dice for the upcoming Adventuring phase, or three dice if he succeeded by 5 or more. A Counsel die is a d4, and it can be added to any Intelligence check. Once it is used, it is expended. Unused Counsel dice are lost at the end of an Adventuring phase.

You can use Shadow-lore to make the check instead: you receive three Counsel dice automatically. But Saruman's knowledge of the Enemy is uncomfortable lore, your hero receives 1 Shadow point as well.

- YEAR 2958 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 7 OR 8

EVENTS

Despite having promised to stay for three years, Saruman leaves in haste in late spring, following a visit from Gandalf the Grey. The pair ride away south, in pursuit of rumours of the Messenger of Mordor.

If Black Tarn Hall was not saved, then the survivors of the siege abandon the 'cursed lake' and come to Rhosgobel and Woodmen-town in search of a new home. If any character has a holding in that area, then Woodmen come looking for work and shelter.

Brigands ambush a raft en route to the Elvenking's halls. They capture the crew and spill the barrels of Dorwinion wine into the river. One of the Elves struggles, and in the fray she is stabbed to death. Rumours claim that the brigands were Men of Dale from the villages on the forest's edge.

Three children go missing from a Barding hamlet near the forest's edge. One boy returns a week later, claiming that "beautiful Elves" took him and his two younger siblings away to a magical feast. In fact, the children were taken by the Wayward Elves (see also *New Background: Changeling*, page 101). Other children may go missing in later years, to return in the same way.

Word comes from Mountain Hall that a great many Goblins are moving under the mountains. Hartfast son of Hartmut calls for aid.

Swarthy strangers from the East arrive in Dale in late summer. They speak the common tongue with a barbarous accent, and say they are escaping a civil war that is raging in their land. They ask for the protection of the Bardings.

ADVENTURING PHASE: SAVING THE MAIDEN

When the Western Eaves of Mirkwood return to life with the breaking of spring, Radagast the Brown seems to awaken with renewed vigour. The Wizard of Wilderland summons the Company to his home in Rhosgobel. He is visibly troubled and questions the companions closely, asking them to describe every interaction they had with the River-maidens in recent years.

If the heroes mention Duskwater's gossamer armour, Radagast seems startled. If pressed, the Brown Wizard confesses that the companions' testimony confirms his gravest suspicions: there is a terrible Spider-creature in Mirkwood, he tells the Company, one of three ancient monsters descended from Ungoliant herself! She is called Tyulqin, and she is the Weaver. Her silken threads are bound with dreadful spells, and conjure illusions so powerful they can even delude a spirit like a River-maiden.

Breaking the Spell

Radagast does not know exactly what must be done to free Duskwater from the Spider's curse, but he is certain that the Company must find the monster that keeps the River-maiden in thrall. But they won't go alone, for the Wizard will accompany them (for the second time, if the companions went with Radagast to Dol Guldur in *Secrets Buried*).

Tyulqin's lair lies somewhere deep in Mirkwood, but she is a secretive monster, and can wrap her refuge in powerful illusions and deceits so that it will never be found even by the best hunter from the races of Men or Elves. (If the companions have encountered Tyulqin before and believe they know where she is to be found, Radagast tells them that the valley they entered was only one of her traps, not her lair). To discover the whereabouts of Tyulqin, the Company must go into the Heart of Mirkwood and attend the Parliament of Spiders.

Every few years, Radagast says, the Spiders of Mirkwood gather in an eerie parliament (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 113). Through his spies in the birds and beasts, he has learned the location of the next session. If Tyulqin is there they can follow her back to her lair, but she rarely attends the gathering. If she is not, then they may be able to persuade the other Spiders to tell them where she lives - Spiders are not like the other animals of the forest, says Radagast with contempt, and they quarrel and fight as easily as Men and Elves do. And luckily they are also equally greedy: in fact, Radagast prompts the companions to find and carry with them a gem of unusual beauty, to excite the legendary lust of the Spiders for such treasure and use it to their advantage. If asked, Radagast explains that Spiders of great age can suck the light from gemstones, and that jewels are a delicacy to them.

Acquiring a Suitable Gem

There are a few options for the Company to acquire a stone of extraordinary worth: The Roadwarden's Staff (see page 30) is topped with a large pearl. King Thranduil is especially fond of precious stones and has many white gems in his treasury. Green gems are also favoured among his folk. The hoard of Smaug too contained many precious crystals and other jewels of great worth; most of that wealth is to be found today in Dale, Lake-town, and especially in the treasure halls of the Dwarves of Erebor. Finally, the folk of Mountain Hall in the Misty Mountains sometimes find gemstones in their mines.

Heroes purchasing such a gem should be prepared to spend 50 gold pieces or more on it.

INTO THE HEART OF MIRKWOOD

The Parliament is located deep in the Heart of Mirkwood (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 109). It is reputed to be approximately one hundred miles east of Woodmentown. Such a journey would test the endurance and the spirit of even the hardiest traveller, but Radagast the Wizard leads the companions, and his arts make the journey easier:

- The Peril Rating of the journey is reduced to 3, and the journey takes only 12 days... half the time it would have taken without Radagast. The Company experiences 1d2+2 Journey Events.
- Radagast carries a flask of his Mirkwood cordial, enough for six sips. A sip restores 1d4 Hit Dice. Radagast does not allow anyone to drink from the flask more than once a day.

Despite the Wizard's presence, the Company's course will take them through some of the most blighted places of Mirkwood. Each hero must make four **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throws against Corruption. Each failure causes the hero to gain 1 Shadow point.

5

Attending the Parliament

Through the deep gloom that hangs eternally from the tangled boughs in the Heart of Mirkwood, the companions see a glimmer of light. This is not the sun, nor the delicate silver radiance of the moon, but an unnatural, sickly shimmering glow. As they draw closer, they see a great clearing in the forest, entirely filled with the largest expanse of Spider-webs any of them have ever seen. It is a castle woven in silk, a city of Spiders, a hall of sticky strands.

Radagast whispers at the Company to be silent, but it is too late – hundreds of Spiders suddenly spill out of the trees and surround them. Radagast slams his staff into the ground, and the many-legged creatures seem to freeze on the spot, with only a thin creaking and bubbling issuing from their mouths betraying their anger. "Talk to them", Radagast hisses, as he concentrates as if the Spiders were held at bay by his very thought.

One of the Company should then volunteer and beg leave to attend the Parliament. The Spiders chitter amongst themselves for a moment. Heroes with one or more points of Shadow understand a few words of what they say, but after a brief while a pair of Spiders scuttle off and return in the company of a weird man with a tangled beard and crazed eyes. He wears nothing but a loin-cloth, and thousands of tiny Spider hatchlings dwell in his beard. He speaks the Common Speech and understands the language of his Spider-masters. In fact, it seems that he thinks he is a Spider himself. He introduces himself as "Man-Talk-Slave-Meat", *Kch-thk* in the Spider's language (he is a Wild Man of Mirkwood, see *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 137).

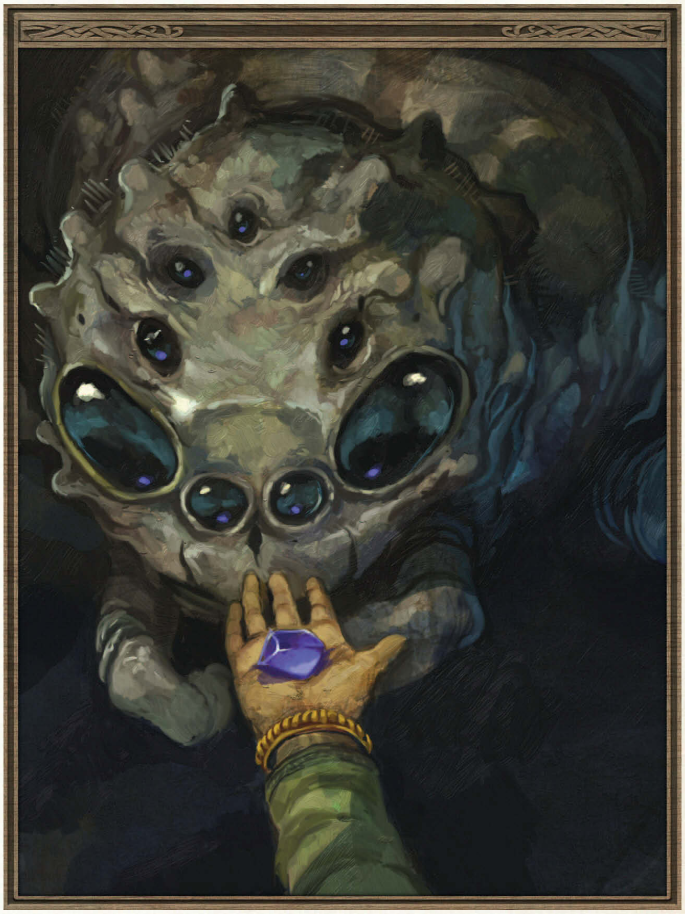
The Spiders say that they will permit the companions to attend for a suitable price - which of them is the fattest and juiciest? If, as they presumably will, the characters proffer a gemstone instead, then a big Spider scuttles over carrying a black chest. It flips the chest lid open with one hairy leg, revealing a small cache of gemstones. Most are of little worth, but resting atop the other stones are two astoundingly beautiful rubies. These gems were given to the Spiders by the Messenger of Mordor in 2951, and each one of them is beyond priceless.

If the companions place the jewel they brought with them into the chest, the Spiders escort them into the Parliament.

5

Addressing the Spiders

This is a scene out of an arachnophobe's nightmare. Spiders are everywhere – big and small, thin and fat, some black as night, others a weird iridescent green or a sickly pale colour like infected pus with legs. One particularly knobbly fat Spider seems to be in charge of ceremonies, and old Kch-thk squats next to it. There are three huge webs that the companions realise must be the equivalent of thrones, but these lie empty for the moment.



"Order! Order!" cries the chair-Spider. *"Sit down, fly-gobblers and web-spinners! Cease your chattering! The Elders are coming!"*

Then, as if summoned by his words, a spidery thing drags itself past the companions and struggles up to the leftmost web-throne. Fat Sarquin is monstrously, obscenely fat and bloated; the soft flesh of her abdomen pulsates and leaks as her attendants struggle to push her up into her seat. Around her, the lesser Spiders squeak "Mother-of-All! Mother-of-All!"

Eight eyes fix on the companions. If they fail this Audience, she'll eat them (see the *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 132 for Sarqin's stats and abilities).

Motivation: Interlopers! Food should be wiggling in webs and not wielding sharp swords! But they did give us a pretty. And the Brown one... he bears watching. What do they want? Why would I not eat you?

Expectations: **-1** if they offered anything other than a gem as surety; +**1** if they offered a gem worth 50g or more; **-2** if there are one or more Hobbits in the party (tales of Bilbo's deeds have spread far and wide in Mirkwood); +**1** if a Woodman or Elf of Mirkwood serves as spokesperson; +**2** if the heroes promise Sarquin more food or gems...

The heroes should choose a hero to be spokesperson and introduce themselves, a **DC 15 Intelligence (Traditions)** check. Radagast could speak for the Company, but prefers to stay silent and prepare for a quick escape if it becomes necessary.

7

Courtly Deliberations

The companions need to find out where Tyulqin's lair is, as she is evidently is not attending the Parliament. But soon after the conversation starts, another huge Spider arrives and takes the rightmost throne. Characters who played through *The Staff of the Roadwarden* recognise this beast (and worse, he may remember them) as Tauler the Hunter. Tauler hates his sister Tyulqin with a fierce loathing. He announces to the Parliament that Tyulqin will not attend because she "serves the agent of the Dark Lord". (Kch-tck will not translate this, but companions with one or more points of Shadow can catch it).

At this point, the companions can ask the assembly of Spiders for information directly, or they can try to be guileful or proceed in any way the players see fit. Unfortunately, the Spiders are not willing to reveal where Tyulqin is to be found, either because they fear her or because they don't know. However, a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check suggests that Tauler is willing to talk to the companions afterwards, and this is true – once the companions leave the Parliament, fleeing or not, he follows them into the woods (see *Meeting Tauler*, below).

Once the heroes have concluded their presentation, make a Final Audience Check. Compare the margin of success (or failure) to the entries below.

Failure: Sarqin's belly rumbles and she decides that her appetite is more important than diplomacy: she attacks! Fortunately, Radagast wants to avoid a direct confrontation with such a powerful creature and, with a spell he has been preparing since the beginning of the Audience, he makes the Company Invisible! The Parliament of Spiders is momentarily stunned, allowing the companions to flee the place - there are far too many Spiders to kill.

0-2: the Spiders barely tolerate the companions to finish talking. They grow visibly impatient, and will hunt them as soon as they leave the assembly.

3-5: the companions entertain or otherwise arouse the curiosity of the Spiders and obtain safe passage through the Heart of Mirkwood - this time.

6 or more: the Spiders are surprised, they have never enjoyed the presence of food without eating it so much in the past! Apply the results of 3-5 above; additionally, the Spiders let their thrall Kch-thk accompany them until they leave the borders of the Heart of Mirkwood (the presence of the Spider-slave gives the heroes Advantage on any attribute checks made as a result of a Journey Event).

Meeting Tauler

5

For so huge a creature, Tauler moves with unnatural stealth. He creeps right up on the companions before they spot his elephantine bulk scuttling through the trees. The Spider hisses and speaks in a mangled version of the Common Tongue, and says "Peeeeaaaceee" instead of attacking.

Tauler has a simple offer. He hates his sister. He knows where she hides, but cannot enter it because of the powerful web-wards she weaves to protect her lair. If the companions destroy her magic webs, then he will be able to murder his sister. A **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight)** check will reveal that Tauler intends to blame the murder of Tyulqin on the companions, to avoid angering the other Spiders. If the characters go along with this, they will find themselves to be sworn enemies of the Spiders of Mirkwood forever – but how do they say no to Tauler?

If they accept, then Tauler will lead them to Tyulqin's lair.

5

Into the Lair

Tyulqin has made her lair under a barren hill thirty miles south-west of the Parliament. As they approach, they see that the trees around the area are covered in some of the most delicate, intricate webs, spun with a fine black Spider-thread and similar to those they spied in the valley in *The Lost Path* (page 36). This is a place of deep Shadow, so each hero must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption tests when entering and leaving, and if they tarry needlessly within.

When the Company is finally in sight of the entrance to Tyulqin's lair, Tauler stops in his tracks and motions the companions to continue; then, he slowly withdraws into the darkness of Mirkwood. Inside the cave, the companions discover that the walls are covered with macabre traceries, beautifully grotesque frets composed of the same black Spider-webs. Their intricacy remind any Elf of something wrought from ithildin, and comparable in artistry to the works of the High-elves of the West - if they ever tried their hand at something so dreary and cheerless.

Looking into these webs, the companions seem to see faces or distant places or feel strange emotions. Why would looking at a particular configuration of Spider- silk make a character feel sad, and another configuration seem to bring nausea and a third trigger feeling like falling in love? Radagast cautions the company against touching or trusting anything in the cave; they need all their resolve and clarity of mind if they dare to explore the deepest tunnels of the Spider's lair. Only by going there they might be able to discover and break the enchantments that keep the River-maiden in thrall.

5

Spider Magic

Tyulqin has woven a number of spells to protect her hideout: the companions must break them to get to the centre of the cave. Each companion is targeted by at least one spell before they reach *The Heart of the Lair* (see overleaf); the bulleted entries below describe the effects of the various enchantments.

Heroes targeted by a spell can perceive the illusion as they did during their previous encounter with Tyulqin: by making a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check when subjected to a vision and then making a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw, or by getting a 20 on the d20 when attempting any action and then succeeding at a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw (see *The Lost Path*, page 36). This time though, the heroes make their Wisdom saving throws with Disadvantage.

Once a character sees through an illusion, he finds that he can dispel it by cutting through a Spider-web nearby, woven with the now-familiar fine black Spider-silk. But breaking each web risks awakening Tyulqin: all the characters must pass a **DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth)** check for each web that they break. If at least one hero fails, then Tyulqin is alerted (see *Confronting Tyulqin*, page 59).

- **Illusion of Enemies:** On at least three occasions, a hero sees enemies lunging out of dark corners and side tunnels, and violently dodges and ducks to get out of the way of their attacks. If the companion does not break the enchantment, he loses 3 (1d6) hit points for each delusional instance.

- **Webs of Misery:** A character is convinced he is to blame for something terrible that may befall the Company - either he believes he has accidentally warned the Spider, something he chose to serve his companions as food was poisoned, and so on. This nagging doubt makes the hero temporarily Miserable and will last until the Company leaves the cave.

- **The False Passage:** The character sees a web-choked passageway that she is sure leads to the Spider's secret lair. If she convinces the Company to follow this direction, everyone loses 7 (2d6) hit points due to the strain to get through.

- **Seductive Spider:** A companion has a vision revealing that Tyulqin is in truth a most beautiful and desirable woman trapped in a Spider's body by the Dark Lord himself. This delusion won't permit the hero to attack Tyulqin until the character is injured by the Spider or he leaves the cave.

- **Horror of Poison:** The character imagines a tiny Spider dart out of a web, scuttle up his leg and bite him. The character feels the agony of poison pumping through his veins, feels his leg burn as though his blood had turned to fire and is considered to be temporarily Poisoned for as long as he remains in the cave.
- **Glimpse of Things to Come:** Maybe not all of Tyulqin's webs are deceitful illusions. The companion sees what she believes are a glimpse of things yet to come, facts related to the character's life and fate (possibly, concerning the fate of a holding, of someone of significance for the hero: a patron, a lord, a lover). The spell has no other effect, but what the hero sees might actually come true. Or not.

5

The Heart of the Lair

If the characters make it to the heart of the lair without alerting the Spider, they enter a large circular chamber. Here, large strands of Spider-web hang as tapestries from above and seem to suck the light out of any torch or lamp the companions might be carrying. The gloom here is that of the blackest of nights. Tyulqin herself clings to the dark ceiling above, almost invisible. She slumbers, her alien mind exploring some strange Spider-dream. All companions must pass a **DC 20 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption or gain 1 Shadow; additionally, companions who fail feel as if they are drowning in deep waters and have trouble attempting any further action: as long as they remain inside the chamber, they have Disadvantage on any ability checks.

After some distressing minutes of total blindness, all companions start to see things once again, as if the chamber was being revealed by the faintest luminescence - Radagast is working his subtle magic.

3

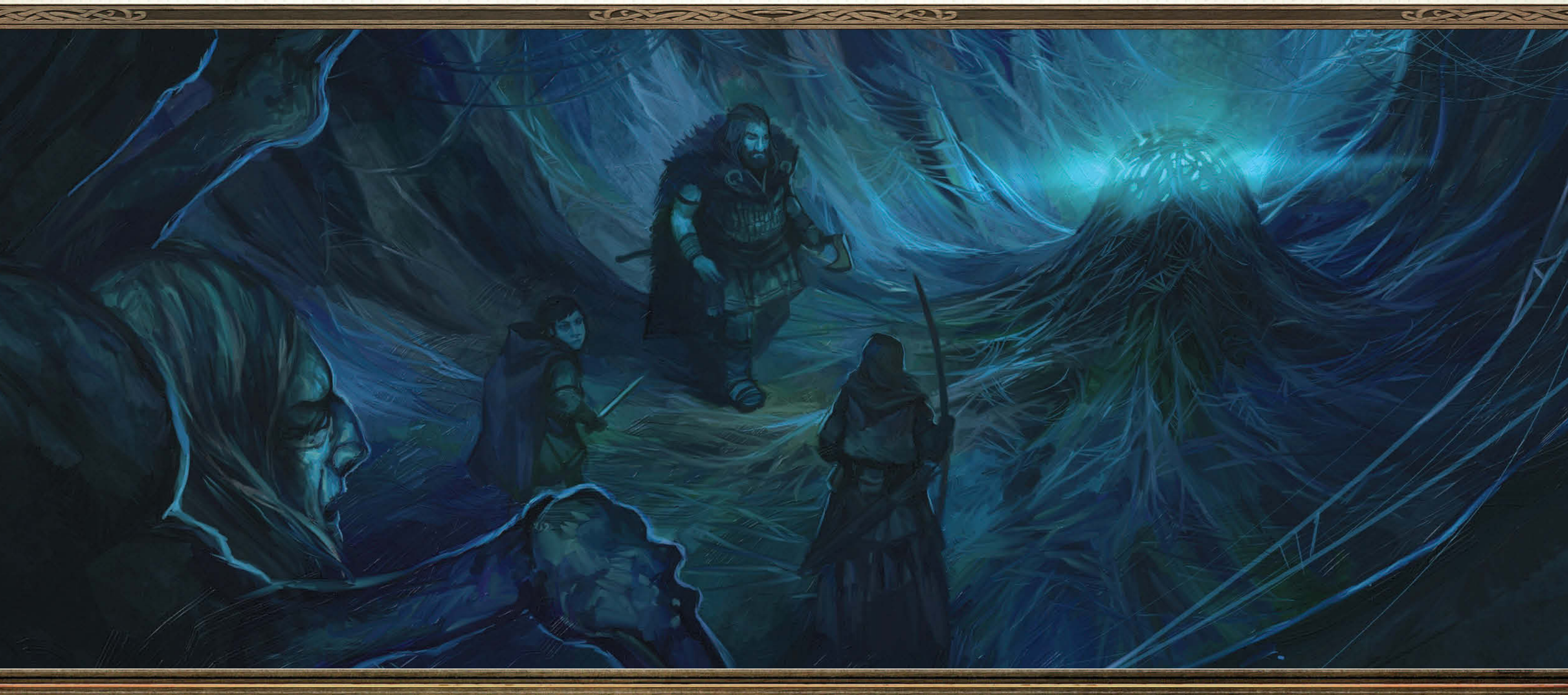
The River-maiden's Trap

An enchanted web holding the spell that dominates the River-maiden can be seen directly under Tyulqin's sleeping form. Looking at the web, a silken spiral architecture covered in water-droplets, the characters glimpse Duskwater's terrified face. The black web can be broken easily by throwing something at it, but this awakens the Spider. Sneaking up and gently cutting the web requires a **DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth)** check.

5

The Girdle of the Tyulqin

Around the perimeter of the chamber are seven pillars of thick black webbing, each as big around as an Ogre's thigh. These webs form the magical girdle of Tyulqin, a warding spell that keeps her siblings from entering her lair unbidden. Breaking these alerts Tyulqin — but breaks the ward and lets Tauler in (see *Confronting Tyulqin*, below).



Each pillar is **AC 10**, with 20 hit points and it is resistant to non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage. Each blow might wake the spider... compare Tyulquin's passive Perception to a DC of 10 plus the damage done this round. On a success, she awakens. If the heroes destroy a column without waking her then she stirs from her dark spider dreams and will awaken in the next round.

7

Confronting Tyulqin

If the Company's presence in the cave is revealed at any time, then Tyulqin reacts with fury. The Spider-creature descends on the companions like a cloud of darkness and first uses her **Webs of Illusion** ability to ambush the Company; then, she will employ her **Mesmerise** ability to trap companions in the thick webbing hanging virtually anywhere in her lair. Finally, she will use her beak and deliver one of her **Many Poisons** to the target.

What About Radagast?

Radagast cannot simply intervene and save the Company from the monster; he has been busy all along preserving the group from the worst effects of entering a blighted place like Tyulqin's lair, and is already weary. But if things go catastrophically wrong, the Brown Wizard may resort to desperate measures: if everything seems lost, Radagast suddenly puts himself between Tyulqin and the Company, and smites the ground with his staff, breaking it!

A blinding flash of light of many hues disperses the strangling gloom of the Spider's lair, repulsing back the vast shape of the Child of Shelob for a time long enough to let the companions escape the place.

If Radagast breaks his staff to save the Company, he will secretly leave Rhosgobel right after the end of the adventure. The Brown Wizard will return only in 2966, leaning upon a new staff, courtesy of the chief of his Order, Saruman the White.

5

Enter Tauler

If the companions managed to destroy the River-maiden's web without awakening Tyulqin, they will need to sneak past Tauler — a **DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth)** check. Normally, getting past the master hunter of Mirkwood would be harder, but the monster is waiting for his sister to emerge so he can ambush her.

If the companions have awoken Tyulqin, but also destroyed her warding spell, then they need only survive three rounds of battle before Tauler leaps into the fray. The two Spiders stare at each other with their lifeless eyes for a brief instant, then Tyulqin flees into the forest, with Tauler hot on her heels. The companions will discover who won the deadly confrontation only afterwards.

To determine the winner, roll a d20. If the heroes did serious harm to Tyulqin or her lair, grant Advantage on this roll. If they snuck past Tauler or otherwise betrayed the hunter, roll with Disadvantage. Compare the result to the table below.

1: Tyulqin weaves a desperate spell of command. Both Spiders survive, but Tauler is now completely subservient to his sister.

2-11: Tyulqin kills Tauler, and now is consumed by an undying hatred for the Company.

12-19: Tauler kills Tyulqin, but he is wounded and is not active in Mirkwood for many months.

20: Both Spiders kill each other.

Return to the Black Tarn

7

The journey back to the Black Tarn takes another 12 days and produces 1d2+2 Journey Events, with a Peril Rating of 5. The Company must again make four **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throws against Corruption (one does not simply walk out of the Heart of Mirkwood!). Radagast leads the companions to the shore of the Black Tarn. Already, the lake seems healthier – the foul weeds are rotting, the water is clearer, the fog less dense. The Wizard searches the shores of the lake for some time, until he spots a group of Black Herons standing still: lying in the rushes among them is the unmoving form of Duskwater. She is pale as death and clearly very weak.

Showing unexpected strength, the Wizard lifts the maiden out of the water and bids that the companions go fetch a boat. There is only one place where her spirit can be fully healed of the Spider's taint – the Hall of Balthi in Woodmen-town. If she is not brought there the River-maiden will die.

5 To Woodmen-town

The characters' boat seems to be hastened on its way by the other two River-maidens, who appear in the waters as a funereal escort for their sister. It is as though the river flows backwards among banks of glimmering mist, and the companions arrive within two days of leaving the Black Tarn. Nothing dares disturb the procession and there are no Journey Events. However, at Woodmen-town, the way to the hall is barred by old Fridwald the Runner and several other warriors of the Woodmen.

"Hail, Radagast. Hail, heroes. You are welcome here." He points a wizened finger at the Maiden. *"She is not. Many have spoken of her treachery at Black Tarn Hall."*

The final challenge is persuading Fridwald to let the River-maiden enter the Hall of the Lamp. The Company and Radagast could force their way past, but that would be an unforgivable breach of the trust between the Wizard and the folk of the Wood. Telling Fridwald that the Maiden was bewitched by agents of the Enemy is also not enough – does that wash away all her crimes? The nature of the Company's previous dealings with the Woodmen of Woodmen-town is critical to the success of their Audience here.

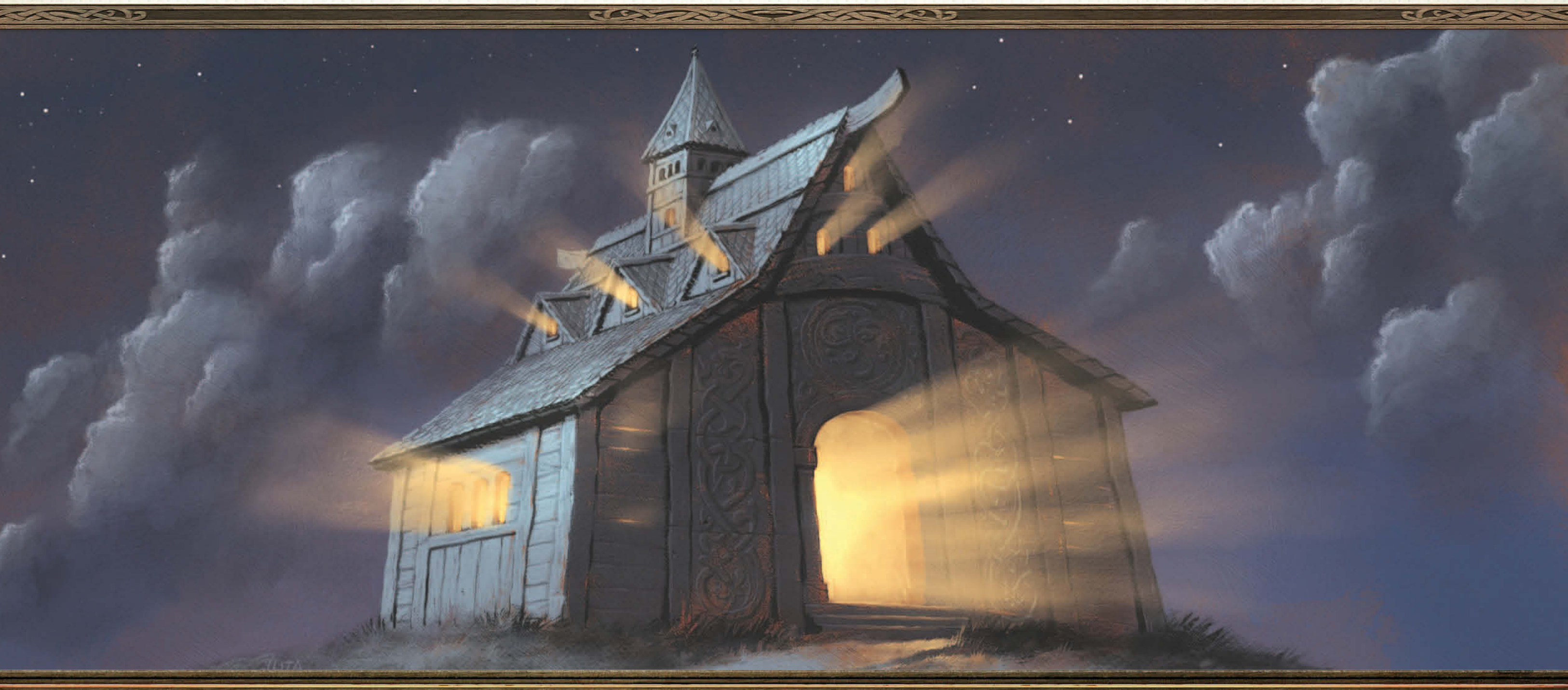
The Hall of the Lamp 7

If the companions convince Fridwald to let them into the House, then Radagast arranges for the unmoving body of Duskwater to be placed upon a bier on the dais, close to where the lamp hangs. Then, the Wizard asks the Woodmen to take down the Lamp of Balthi from its place of honour.

The Hall-warden, a woman in charge of the keeping of the lamp, operates the chains and pulleys that hold the lamp aloft, and lowers it. Then, she carefully removes the glass case, exposing the Elven-lamp within for all to see. The unfiltered blue light that issues from the lamp washes over the assembly of bystanders.

Companions who have never seen the Lamp of Balthi out of its case before must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 10 plus the number of Shadow points they possess. Elves and Dúnedain have Advantage on the check. Those who fail are partially Blinded for a few hours; those who pass it can remove 1 Shadow point, or 2 points if they rolled a 20 on the die (these effects only apply upon the first occasion of looking at the unfiltered light of the lamp).

Any hero who participated in *The Beast of the Forest* (see page 32) recognise the lamp as the twin of the ruined one found in the Werewolf's lair. If there are any Elves of Mirkwood present when the lamp is exposed, they



recognise the crystal within as the work of Ormal. If this is reported to the Thranduil, it precipitates the events of *The Anger of the Elvenking* early (see page 74).

The effects of the light on Duskwater are difficult to perceive: the River-maiden remains still, but a **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine)** check catches imperceptible signs of a future recovery — her breathing seems deeper and more regular, and some warmth seems to have already returned to her limbs. She will live.

Aftermath

If the companions saved the River-maiden from the curse of the Spider, then that is worth a fine reward – the Loremaster should consider giving each player Inspiration as well as the appropriate Experience Awards.

If the companions failed, or chose not to go on this quest, then Radagast can only deal with Duskwater in a direct and personal way. He sails out onto the Black Tarn alone one night, and shortly after a thunderstorm hits the area. For five days and nights heavy rains wash over the Black Tarn, then, the storms cease abruptly. Radagast returns to Rhosgobel, his face pale and drawn - Duskwater is never seen again, and a new maiden takes her place in time (see below). The Brown Wizard is grief-stricken, and vanishes for several years. He won't return before 2966.

A New River-maiden

If Duskwater perishes, then a new River-maiden is needed. Over the course of the following year, both her siblings grow older and darker – Silverbell leaves the springs in the northern part of the River and moves to dwell closer to Woodmen-town, while Sunshadow is seen more and more in the Black Tarn itself.

If any of the company have the River-blooded virtue (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 101), then one of their female relatives may be called as the new River-maiden. (A female companion who wishes to retire could also become the new River-maiden). Otherwise, the new River-maiden is a stern guardian of the forest, like a feral child who ferociously defends the river, and her name is Ice-spear.

Year's End

Even if Black Tarn Hall survived, the borders of the Westerns Eaves of Mirkwood are not yet safe: any companion who spends the Fellowship phase there may undertake to Patrol the Wild.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Patrol the Wild

The Woodmen of Western Mirkwood always welcome those who would join them as they spend long weeks patrolling the borders of their settled lands, hunting down trespassing Orcs and beasts, and generally "beating the bounds" as the Hobbits put it.

A companion spending a Fellowship phase in Woodland Hall, Woodmen-town or Rhosgobel may choose this undertaking and make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. Heroes with *Enemy-lore*, *Region-lore (Mirkwood)* or who are Woodmen make this check with Advantage. On a success, the wearying days spent looking for signs of evil grant the hero 1 Patrol die for the upcoming Adventuring phase. The hero receives 2 Patrol dice if they succeed by 5 or more, or 3 Patrol dice if they roll a 20 on the die. A Patrol die is a d4 and can be added to any roll during a journey in which the hero is serving as a Look-out or Scout. Unused Patrol dice are lost at the of the Adventuring phase.

- YEAR 2959 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 8 OR 9

Events

With the lifting of the curse, the Black Tarn begins to heal. The Marsh-dwellers leave the lake and move north along the river, digging their strange burrows among the reeds. They try to lure the Woodmen into traps, and the weird tolling of marsh-bells echoes from the eastern bank of the Dusky River.

Enraged by the attack on Tyulqin, the Spiders of Mirkwood rampage through the woods. They turn on the Wild Men of Mirkwood who dwell north of the East Bight (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 113) and these primitive barbarians flee before their wrathful masters. Some even trespass into the Woodland Realm, while others take up residence in the Long Marshes.

The Messenger of Mordor returns from his journey to Barad-Dûr, bearing new orders from the Dark Lord. The three Nazgûl of Mirkwood gather in council in Dol Guldur. Those allied with the Shadow are also summoned to the Hill of Sorcery; any character with a permanent Shadow point or a Shadow rating of 3 or more feels strangely drawn to Dol Guldur. If Mogdred is an enemy of the Woodmen, then he goes to Dol Guldur. If Ceawin is in the thrall of the Wood-wights, then he falls into a dreamless sleep for several days during the gathering.

At the gathering, the Nazgûl discuss their new commands. Before the death of Smaug the Dragon, Sauron intended to attack the North first, to cut off the realms of the Elves from the descendants of Númenor in the South. But now the North has changed - the Ringwraiths are to redouble their efforts to destroy the Free Peoples – first the Woodmen, then the Elves, then Erebor and Dale.

Secretly, the Messenger of Mordor travels through the Vales of Anduin to the land of the Viglundings. He promises the friendship of Mordor to Viglund if he seizes the crossings of the Anduin. He then travels on north, to Mount Gundabad.

Men bearing the device of the Tyrant's Hill attack villages in the East Nether Vales. Many are slain, and many houses put to the torch. Mogdred claims that the bandits were former servants of his, but that he dismissed them some months ago and they are now free men living in the eaves of Southern Mirkwood, near Dol Guldur.

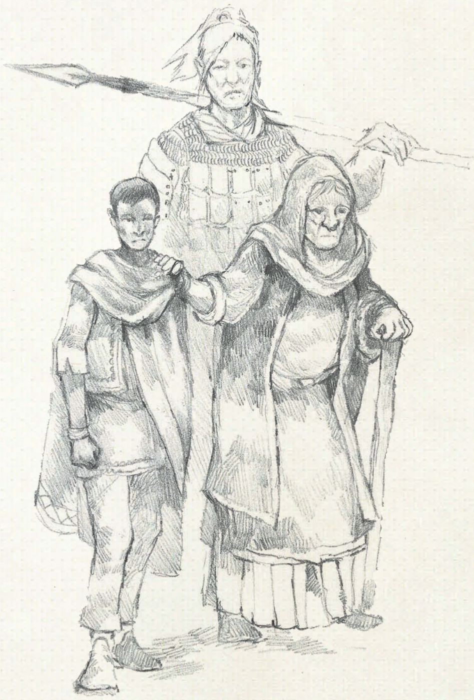
Adventuring Phase: The Horse-lord's Daughter

Wilderland has been stricken by plagues and wars that depopulated much of the region. Lands that once were fertile and fruitful are today empty and barren, or sparsely inhabited by tenacious tribes like the Woodmen and the Beornings. The folk called the Leofrings were nomads and herders who followed the summer grass along the vales. They never settled in one place for long, but wandered along the river banks on their horses. In years past, the Leofrings were sometimes friends of the Woodmen of Rhosgobel, but they never dared to defy their fear of Mirkwood and visit Woodmen-town.

In the year 2940, a year before the death of Smaug, Orcs and Men from Dol Guldur attacked Dwarrowhall, a Leofring encampment, and killed many and took many horses. The other Leofrings fled south and crossed the river Anduin, settling in the Field of Celebrant. (See *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 66).

The Strangers from the East

Three strangers arrive from the East, and somehow cross the Company's path. Perhaps they meet in a village of the Woodmen, or maybe they blunder into the heroes in the deep forest, or come to a companion's home seeking shelter. They are a curious trio indeed.



Two are clearly Easterlings, with dark skin and clothing of a kind not seen in the west, although they have travelling cloaks and boots that were clearly recently acquired ; one is a boy of twelve years, and has a kingly air about him, but his skin is marked by recent welts of whips and the bite of knives. The other Easterling is the woman who accompanies the boy, an old crone who is plainly exhausted by her long journey.

The third traveller is a woman of around twenty-five years. She is dressed in similar clothes to the rest, but her golden hair marks her as clearly kin to the Northmen. She is tanned from long years in a hot country. She alone carries a sword. She introduces herself as Athala, and tells her tale if the heroes give her and her companions shelter.

5

Athala's Tale

Athala's parents were folk of the Leofrings. She remembers coming to Rhosgobel once, when she was very young, and meeting Radagast. Nineteen years ago, their camp was attacked by Orcs and Men from the forest. Her parents were slain, and she was sold into slavery in the East. There, she was raised and trained as an exotic bodyguard for a noble family.

In recent years, great change has come to the East. Servants of He who in the West is called the Dark Lord Sauron have claimed positions of authority, and many members of the older aristocracy were forced to flee. The young man in Athala's company is Sanjar, a prince of one of the countries of Rhûn. The other woman is his governess Nazhin. Athala brought Sanjar to Mirkwood to save him from torture and assassination.

Athala had other reasons to return to Wilderland: she is seeking revenge. Even if many years passed, she remembers clearly the face of the man who killed her parents and her sisters. He was a young man then, younger than she is now. He may still be alive – but if he is dead, why, someone must have ordered the attack. Her sword is thirsty...

First, though, she must bring Sanjar and Nazhin to a place of safety. Then, she will seek out her enemy. She describes the young man to the companions: the description clearly matches Mogdred, the lord of the Tyrant's Hill.

7

The Crimes of Mogdred

Athala's claim that Mogdred is responsible for her suffering is of more importance to the folk of Mirkwood than she realises. According to Mogdred, he was a slave in Dol Guldur nineteen years ago, and only rose to command the Tyrant's Hill after the Wise drove out the Necromancer. If Athala is to be believed, then Mogdred was leading Orc raids long before that. Only one who had willingly chosen to serve the Necromancer could have been of such high standing.

Athala wants to kill Mogdred, with or without the Company's help. She's a skilled warrior, but knows nothing about surviving in the forest of Mirkwood. If she goes off alone in search of the Tyrant's Hill, she will likely end up eaten by Spiders or killed by Mogdred's men. The companions can help Athala get to Mogdred and have her revenge, or they can oppose her resolve.

- **Entering the Tyrant's Hill:** The Tyrant's Hill is fortified and well guarded (doubly so if Mogdred is a servant of Dol Guldur). Sneaking in and coming out alive will be very difficult.

- **Confronting Mogdred:** If the companions ask Mogdred for his side of the story, he laughs. He then either denies everything ("I was a slave nineteen years ago, just as she was. She hates the wrong man"), or claims that he was forced to lead the attack ("It was a lifetime ago. The man I was is dead").

- **Accusing Mogdred:** The companions could wait until the Woodmen are assembled, then accuse Mogdred in public of lying (an opportunity will arise in 2960, at Ingomer's funeral).

- **Convincing Athala to wait:** If the characters help her find a place of safety for Sanjar, she is willing to forego revenge for a year or two.

Year's End

7

In years past, the Leofrings were allies of the Woodmen. If the horse-nomads returned to Wilderland, then they might again be friends of the Free Peoples. The journey south to the the Field of Celebrant is not especially hazardous if a traveller takes a boat down the Great River, and avoids the reach of Dol Guldur. There, the companions can meet with the Leofrings and befriend them. If the companions speak of the alliance of the Free Peoples, then the Leofrings may even choose to migrate north once more. Alternatively, the characters may choose to establish trade links with the Leofrings (possibly as a holding), or even open the Field of Celebrant as a sanctuary.

"There Was Something Else At Work..."

The Loremaster should be warned that as the text of this guide goes, the following year's Adventuring phase works best if Mogdred is alive, seemingly allied with the Woodmen, but secretly in the service of Dol Guldur. If the actions of the companions steer the campaign in a different direction (they let Athala kill Mogdred right away, for example) a level of reworking will be required. The Loremaster should keep in mind that while it is never a good policy to arrange events in spite of a company's actions, things do not always develop in the way they seem destined to be. For example, if Athala discredits Mogdred in the eyes of some of the Woodmen, other Houses may still support him. Maybe Athala mortally wounds the lord of the Tyrant's Hill but Mogdred is painfully healed by the Ringwraiths of Dol Guldur, using dark arts that turn him in something more than just a black traitor...

- YEAR 2960 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 8 OR 9

EVENTS

The conflict between the Viglundings and the Beornings flares up again. The Viglundings attack several homesteads of the followers of Beorn, and take many slaves. There are no big battles, but many small skirmishes.

Beorn grudgingly dispatches a messenger to Thranduil, telling him of the war he is fighting. Thranduil orders a group of Elven warriors to travel to the western edge of Northern Mirkwood and lend what aid they can to the Beornings. Some in the court whisper that the affairs of Men are of no concern to the Woodland Realm, and that Thranduil is acting unwisely.

The Forest Dragon (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 79) leaves her lair and starts hunting along the eaves of Northern Mirkwood. Travel along the forest's edge and the Elf-path becomes more hazardous.

The Messenger of Mordor commands the Orcs of Mount Gundabad to aid the Viglundings in their war against Beorn. The Orcs obey, and Goblins innumerable leave their dens to harry the Beornings. Some go south to attack Mountain Hall.

ADVENTURING PHASE: THE DEATH OF INGOMER

In this year, Ingomer Axebreaker of Woodland Hall dies suddenly. The veteran warrior does not die in battle, but neither does he die in bed like a weak old man – he falls dead at a feast, tumbling from his chair and spilling his horn of wine.

Ingomer's death comes at a bad time for the folk of the wood. The growing Shadow in the south, the siege of Black Tarn Hall and now rumours of conflict in the north are all worrisome. In times past, Ingomer was always called to be the war-leader of the Men of Mirkwood and a rallying banner for the four Houses; all the folk from the Misty Mountains to the Wizard's Hedge trusted and honoured him. Many folk of the Wood gather at his funeral to discuss the coming days.

THE FUNERAL

If Mogdred is an ally of the Woodmen, then he attends the funeral as a matter of course. However, if he is an enemy, then the Woodmen must decide whether or not to permit him to attend. He was Ingomer's son (see *The Folk-moot at Rhosgobel*, page 14) and so it would be very rude not to allow him pay his respects to his sire. The elders among the Woodmen are divided on the matter, and discuss it at length, but in the end they decide to let him in. If the players argue forcefully against this, the elders may reconsider, but this insult will damage the companions' reputation among the Woodmen - a son's filial duty is held sacred.

The funeral rites are held at Woodland Hall, and last four days. The body of Ingomer is set upon a bier inside the

Great Hall of Wuduseld. Many songs are sung of Ingomer's prowess and glorious battles. Many speak of how Ingomer was elected war-leader in a time of need, and how dark days are again at hand. Many voices speak of how a new war-leader must be chosen, to bring the Houses together.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** or **Intelligence (Riddle)** check lets a companion realise that this swell of demand for a new war-leader is no coincidence. Someone has deliberately seeded rumours to raise the question. While many do agree with the need for a new war-leader, not all of the voices are honest ones.

The Arrival of Mogdred

Mogdred enters the hall of Wuduseld dressed less like a Man of Mirkwood and more like a prince from the South. He wears a coat of gilded mail, and on his brow shines a gemstone set upon a circlet. His men, too, are richly dressed and are led by the warrior-maiden Dagmar (if she is still alive).

Mogdred brings gifts of gold to those who mourn his father's passing. Thirteen years have passed since the folkmoot at Rhosgobel. At that time Mogdred was a young chieftain. Now, he is more than forty years old; his beard is grey, and he looks more like his father than ever. Many whisper that he looks and sounds more like Ingomer than Ingomer did in recent years.

To the folk of Woodland Hall, any conflict or mistrust between the Tyrant's Hill and the Woodmen of Rhosgobel is not much more than a distant rumour. Even if Mogdred was previously an enemy of the Woodmen, the young warriors of Woodland Hall start to clamour for him to be elected war-leader. The whispers become shouts, and it is clear that Mogdred will be chosen unless someone stands against him.

The Election of the Group Leader

All the Houses of the Woodmen (Mountain Hall, Woodland Hall, Woodmen-town, Rhosgobel, and possibly Sunstead, Black Tarn Hall and Tyrant's Hill, depending on previous events) have sent representatives to the funeral, and they have the authority to elect a war-leader. At the end of the four days of mourning, they gather at the doom-ring outside the hedge and stockade that protect the village, and a council is held.

To see who will be chosen as the new war-leader of the Woodmen, first the starting support of the candidates must be determined, in the form of a numerical rating.

- *Mogdred* seems the obvious choice – he is the son of Ingomer, he has the most supporters, his tower is well-fortified and is a bulwark against Dol Guldur. He has a starting support of **12** if the Tyrant's Hill is allied with the Woodmen, and between **8** and **6** if he is an enemy, based on the current state of the campaign being played. Discrediting Mogdred with Athala's testimony (see *The Horse-Lord's Daughter*) reduces his support by 3 points.

- *Ceawin the Generous.* If Sunstead is counted among the Woodmen Houses, his starting support is **9** (reduced to **7** if he is in thrall of the Wood-wights).

- *Munderic the Ponderous*, a fat warrior from Woodmen-town. He is Fridwald the Runner's nephew, and he is friend with many warriors of the Woodmen, but he is more of a front-line fighter and a drinking buddy than a leader. His starting support is **6**.

- *A Woodman companion.* If one of the heroes wishes to run for the position then his starting support is equal to his level.

Companions may then throw their support behind one candidate or another, entering the doom-ring to make a speech praising their chosen leader or criticising another (using skills like **Deception, Intimidation, Performance, Persuasion, Riddle** or **Traditions**). The **DC** for the check is equal to 8 plus the current support of the leader. Woodmen companions gain Advantage on the check.

A success for praise increases the leader's support by 1 while a successful criticism reduces it by 1. If the hero fails the check with a 1 on the die, the leader's support is moved by 2 in the opposite direction.

Once all the speeches have been made, add 1d6 to each leader's final support value. The candidate with the highest total is deemed the new war-leader of the Woodmen. (Ties are resolved by rolling again, unless both candidates agree to act as joint leaders.)

The Decisions of the War-leader

The actions of the Woodmen in the years to come are partially determined by their choice of a war-leader:

- *Mogdred.* This is the worst possible choice – if he is not already in the service of Dol Guldur, then Mogdred's ascension to a place of power in the Woodmen draws the attention of the Ghost of the Forest. The Nazgûl approach Mogdred and tempt him to use his authority to weaken the Woodmen. In the years to come, Mogdred will order warriors into fruitless quests and hopeless battles, and push the best of the next generation of Woodmen to become followers of darkness.

- *Ceawin.* If the companions saved Ceawin from the Wood-wights, then Ceawin makes a fine leader. He is understandably focused on protecting the East Bight, but that means the Woodmen form a bulwark against the Shadow in the south. However, if Ceawin is in the thrall of the Wood-wights, then his election as war-leader proves disastrous. His black rages and frequent bouts of madness become more acute, and his words seem to indicate that in his confused mind he is fighting a war not against Dol Guldur, but against the plague and the foes that destroyed the confederation of the Northmen many centuries ago.

- *Munderic.* Munderic is a poor but not disastrous war-leader. He alternates between ignoring problems for too long, and then charging wildly into battle without a clear plan. Still, if the heroes and other wiser heads can exert influence on him (his uncle Fridwald, for example) he can be guided to a measure of success.

- *A Companion.* This is the best result, if the character has the wisdom and valour to see it through. See also the Year's End entry below.

Year's End

If a companion has been chosen to be the war-leader of the Woodmen, then he must spend the Year's End Fellowship phase in Woodmen-town and choose the Receive Title (War-leader) undertaking (see box opposite).

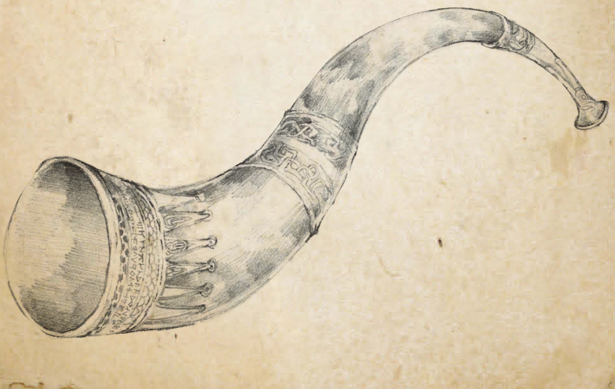
Receive Title (War-leader)

As war-leader, a companion is required to command the Woodmen in battle and has the respect of the Elders of the Houses of the Woodmen. He is not a king, but he is a general and a champion in times of strife. The title of war-leader can be revoked by a council of Elders at any time, should the companion prove to be unworthy of the charge, as in the case of a humiliating defeat on the field of battle.

The companion's Standard of Living is now considered to be Prosperous. If the companion has a holding among the Woodmen, its Rating is improved by 1 (to a maximum of +6) as folk flock to the banner of the new war-leader.

Additionally, the companion becomes the bearer of the Great War-horn of the Hunter, a treasure of the Woodmen Houses of Mirkwood. Fashioned of old from the horn of one of the great kine of Araw by a Gondorian hero by the name of Vorondil, it was given to a prince of Rhovanion as a gift (Vorondil wore its mate on a baldric, and the horn is today an heirloom of his family, the House of the Stewards of Gondor).

The Great War-horn of the Hunter may be blown as an action in combat. All allies of the war-leader may then use their reaction to recover hit points equal to 7 (2d6) plus the war-leader's Proficiency Bonus. Once the Great War-horn has been sounded, the war-leader must take a short rest before using it again.



the gathering gloom:
- 2961-2966 -

At this time, the fortress of Dol Guldur is rebuilt. The Werewolf of Mirkwood attacks the settlements of the Woodmen. The feud between the Beornings and the Viglundings reach a bloody conclusion. The forest turns darker as Elves and Men see their dealings become tense.

- year 2961 -

for heroes of level 8 or 9

Events

Since the year 2954, Orcs and evil Men have laboured to rebuild the dread fortress of Dol Guldur. This year, their task approaches completion. While not all the defences of the Hill of Sorcery can be restored without the aid of Sauron, the fortress is now fully manned again.

The Werewolf of Mirkwood is seen crossing the Dusky River. It attacks homesteads near Woodland Hall, until warriors with burning brands dismay it and drive it back. Still, the monster lurks in the woods nearby for the rest of the year, and kills again at least three times.

A council of Woodmen Elders gather in Woodmen-town to discuss the recent events in the forest. Some argue that they should join the Beornings in their fight with the Viglundings, saying that if they help Beorn now, he will help them in return.

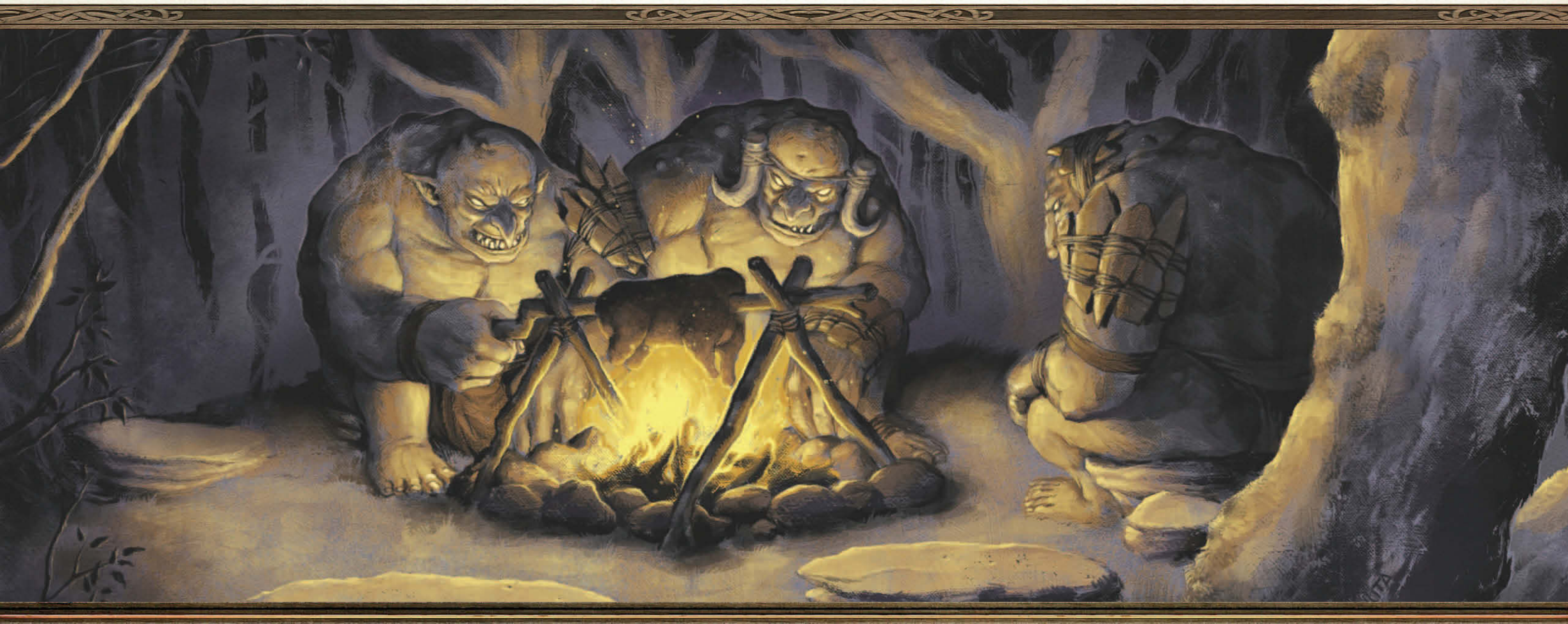
A wet spring and a warm summer augur for a good harvest in Wilderland this year. While the Woodmen do not sow much, their allies in the East Bight and Dale do rely heavily on farmed crops.

The Beornings defeat the Viglundings in a battle near the Forest Gate, aided by Elves from the Woodland Realm. Broken, some Viglundings retreat into Mirkwood while the rest flee north. Beorn and his men pursue, but their chase is interrupted by a counter-attack from a host of Goblins and Trolls who lurked in the shadow of the trees.

The Messenger of Mordor rides around the northern edge of Mirkwood, passing through the Narrows of the Grey Mountains and calling up Orcs, Trolls and other monsters. He then rides south, stealing past Dale like a shadow, and meets with his spies and agents outside Lake-town.

Adventuring Phase: Paying the Troll

If the companions are familiar with the exiled Dwarf Frár the Beardless (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 22) then he



seeks them out to aid him. Otherwise, they can meet Frár if they travel across the Grey Mountain Narrows, or even along the Elf-path in Northern Mirkwood: the Dwarf is heading towards the Woodland Realm to ask the Elves for help, but he would much rather deal with a company of adventurers than go begging at Thranduil's door.

Frár tells the Company of a band of ferocious Hill-trolls that recently took up residence in Northern Mirkwood. They were part of a Goblin army that came south out of the Grey Mountains, but split off after the battle with the Beornings and are now camped near the Elf-path, waiting to ambush travellers. Frár begs the Company for aid in dealing with these Trolls. He knows roughly where they are, and offers to guide the heroes there, once they have stopped briefly by his refuge in the forest.

Frár leads the Company through Mirkwood. For a Dwarf, he is remarkably woodcrafty, and moves through the underbrush almost as silently as a Hobbit. He is taciturn for most of the journey, but as they draw closer to his refuge, he starts talking heatedly about the lost Greydelve (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 24), a stronghold that was built by his forefathers long ago in the Grey Mountains, and now overrun with filthy creatures. Why, he even suspects that these particular Trolls dwelt in its halls! He is proud to have the chance to kill them. If the companions met Frár before, they find the years have mellowed him somewhat; his beard too has regrown, and he seems less bitter and angry, as if his long exile has finally taught him a little patience.

Frár's current hideout is located in a rocky hill covered with dark pines. While a perceptive companion can spot footprints in the mud, broken twigs and other signs of habitation, the stones he has placed to cover the entrance to a natural cave are positioned so cleverly that the opening is invisible to anyone except a Dwarf. Frár approaches the entrance to the cave, then stops dead. "Someone is here," he whispers. "Wait a moment." He slips into the darkness, then comes back a moment later. "Forgive the alarm! It is my kinsman Flor. Come in, and be welcome."

The Refuge

Frár's current refuge is bare and grim. He normally resides in a hidden house along the northern edge of Mirkwood, in sight of the Grey Mountains Narrows, but his constant wanderings require him to make use of several less comfortable lodgings.

A corner of the cave is occupied by some improvised pantry shelves storing a little dried fruit and biscuits, while the hard stone floor is made somewhat more comfortable by a thick layer of straw; there is no fire, just a cunning portable Dwarven stove that gives little heat and no smoke, for smoke would reveal the location of the refuge.

A second Dwarf, Flor, sits by the stove, digging out fleas from his beard and roasting them on the hot griddle. He grins as the companions enter, and hops up and bows. "Flor, at your service." He then beckons Frár aside, and the two have a brief conversation in a hushed voice. It would be the height of rudeness for a guest to eavesdrop. If a character does so, then he gains a point of Shadow, but hears Flor question Frár about where the Company came from: Flor thought Frár was going to fetch Elvish warriors, not adventurers! Frár explains that the companions are renowned heroes and experienced Troll-killers, and, besides, they were closer than the Woodland Realm.

Flor tells the Company that he has been tracking the Trolls; they are camped half a day's march from their refuge. He will lead the Company there in the morning.

If questioned, Flor tells the Company that there are three Trolls, but they are common Stone-trolls – dangerous, but nothing an experienced band of heroes cannot handle.

As everyone knows, Stone-trolls turn to stone in the direct light of the sun, but unfortunately the thick foliage of Mirkwood provides almost as much shelter as a mountain cave, allowing the Trolls to avoid sunlight.

If a companion asks for a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check, she feels uneasy about Flor's words, but the Dwarf is an accomplished liar and it is impossible to tell for sure if he is being truthful or deceitful.

Flor's Secret

Like Frár, Flor dreams of returning to the Greydelve. Unlike his kinsman though, he is prepared to bargain with the Enemy to do so. Flor met the Messenger of Mordor last year, and promised to serve Dol Guldur. In exchange, the Nazgûl promised Flor that the Orcs would one day hand over control of the Greydelve, when the destruction of the Woodland Realm will make all of Mirkwood the domain of the Enemy.

Faithful to his dark pact, Flor is about to lead the Company into a trap...

The Troll Ambush

8

The next day, Flor and Frár leave their refuge along with the Company, and lead the adventurers through the woods to the encampment of the Trolls. Their journey passes through a thicket of black yew trees of great height; an Elf recognises this particular stand as *Cuimenan*, the Garden of the Crafted (or Piercing) Arches, a stand of trees planted to grow wood for the Elven bows of war.

In the gloom of Mirkwood up ahead, the companions spot three Stone-trolls sitting around a campfire. The carcass of some animal – possibly a boar, maybe a Man – roasts on a spit. The Trolls pull at their skin, scraping off flakes of stone.

Unfortunately for the heroes, more Trolls lurk in the nearby woods, waiting to ambush the Company.

- If the companions charge into battle, the other Stone-trolls burst out of cover and attack with Advantage on their first round of combat.
- If the companions try scouting the area first, then a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)** check spots the Trolls lurking in the trees, while a **Perception** check notices that there are seven big stones in a ring around the campfire, but there are only three Trolls sitting there on one stone each. Those stones are seats – there must be four more nearby!
- If the companions try sneaking up, then Fror shouts "They're here! They're here!" to alert the Trolls.

Unexpected Guests

When the ambush is sprung, three tough-looking Stone-trolls stride out of the trees wielding clubs – followed by something that looks like another Stone-troll, but a lot bigger than the others, a hulking monster dressed in black chain mail!

This Stone-troll chief was king in the wild wastes beyond the Grey Mountains, until the call of the Shadow drew him south. The other Trolls just call him Basher. He snarls a challenge to the companions in a mangled version of the Common Speech. Meanwhile, the three Trolls by the fire grab clubs and weighted nets and approach.

Frár is appalled by his kinsman's treachery. Flor screams that "He promised that they would give us back the Greydelve if we killed enough Elves! You were supposed to bring me Elves!" Frár draws his axe, and starts to run after his kinsman - both disappear into the forest (Frár eventually cannot bring himself to slay Flor - the heroes may not have any such compunction if they ever lay their hands on him!).

STONE-TROLL CHIEF

Large Giant (Troll-kind)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)

Armour Class 17 (Troll-chain)
Hit Points 115 (10d10+60)
Speed 30 ft

Saving Throws Dexterity +3
Senses darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 8
Languages Orcish, Westron
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Sunlight Curse. Stone-trolls become Petrified and turn into stone if they are touched by the bright light of the sun. If exposed to sunlight, the Stone-troll chief must make a **DC 10 Dexterity** saving throw at the beginning of its turn in order to find enough cover to avoid being turned to stone. On a failure, the Stone-troll becomes Petrified.

Actions

Clobbering Sweep (1/day). The Stone-troll Chief can use his great size to strike multiple foes at once. He can make a melee attack against any number of targets within 5 feet, with a separate attack roll for each target. Targets must also make a **DC 13 Dexterity** check or be knocked Prone.

Multiattack. The Stone-troll chief makes three attacks: two with his troll-club and one slam.

Troll-club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) bludgeoning damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) bludgeoning damage.

Weighted Nets

Three of the Stone-trolls carry weighted nets, and may throw them onto a victim to trap them. They gain the following action:

Weighted Net. Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, range 10/20 ft, one target. Hit: the target becomes Restrained. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 15 Strength check, escaping from the net on a success. The effect also ends if the net is destroyed. The netting has AC 10, 20 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage and immunity to bludgeoning, poison and psychic damage.

Unsurmountable Odds

The companions face six Stone-trolls (page 110 of the *Loremaster's Guide*) and one Stone-troll Chief (see above) – these are never good odds. Fleeing is an excellent plan, although hardened warriors may prefer to fight.

- **Flee!** To escape the battle, each hero must take the Dash action, possibly provoking an Opportunity Attack (a hero might be able to Disengage and then Dash without the Opportunity Attack). However, the Trolls will not give up easily... each hero must make a successful **DC 15** check of **Acrobatics, Athletics** or **Stealth** to elude them. Frár urges the heroes to return to his refuge, the trolls will never discover the hidden entrance.

- **Fight!** Seven trolls would be a challenge even for a hero of old. The Stone-trolls are much more frightened of their chief Basher than they are of the companions, so they will fight to the death as long as Basher is alive. If Basher is slain, then all the Stone-trolls become **Craven** and when reduced to half hit points must make a **DC 10 Wisdom** saving throw or become Frightened of the heroes and must take the Dash or Disengage action if possible (if not, they take the Dodge action).

- **Captured!** Companions captured by the Trolls are not killed – at least, not right away. Basher questions them first - "no Elf-tricks ", he roars – demanding that they tell him all they know about the Woodland Realm and the Elves who guard the Forest Gate at the western end of the path. He is clearly planning to make the road impassable, preventing anyone from crossing Mirkwood safely. Once a prisoner can no longer provide useful information, he is handed over to the Stone-trolls to be prepared for the cooking spit.

SURVIVING THE ENCOUNTER

The situation is indeed complicated. First, these Trolls are not easy to fool; while clever roleplaying might lead them to bicker amongst themselves (with very good **Persuasion** checks, for example), imprisoned companions cannot simply keep them talking long enough for the sun to rise, as its rays will not penetrate the forest canopy. Fleeing characters could turn the tables on the Trolls, and guide the monsters into an ambush or a trap at the Forest Gate. (The pit trap encountered in *The Questing Beasts* is not too far from the Troll camp, for example).

Some hope remains with Frár the Beardless. Ashamed for his kinsman's betrayal, he will return to the scene of the ambush and attempt to save the companions if he can. He brings reinforcements, the mad brothers Polin and Pomin (page 19), if they are still alive, and possibly other Dwarf exiles from the Greydelve. In any case, the force he is able to gather is not enough to defeat the Stone-trolls, but only to distract them long enough for the companions to find a way to save themselves. If everything ends well, Frár apologises for Flor's actions. Some dark power must have reached to his kinsman, promising the return of the Greydelve in exchange for his betrayal. Flor is nowhere to be found; he fled screaming madly into the depths of Mirkwood.

YEAR'S END

The Stone-trolls on the Elf-path may become a problem that requires several adventures to be dealt with. The companions should consider paying a visit to the Woodland Realm, to warn the Elvenking of the grievous matter.

Holdings that benefitted from the excellent weather earlier in the year reduce the DC for their Holding Upkeep checks by 2.

Treasure of the Trolls

If Basher and the Stone-trolls are slain, companions looking for their lair find a cave nearby which the monsters used as their larder – and their treasury. Treasure worth 200 gold pieces or more are there for the taking, the bulk of it in Dwarf-gold stolen from the Greydelve. Some of the treasure, though, was clearly taken from recent victims, so there are a few Beorning combs and arm-rings thrown on top of the Dwarf-forged gilded helms and necklaces.

Frár and the other exiled Dwarves claim the treasure from the Greydelve. If the companions take all the treasure for themselves they earn the enmity of Frár and his kin, even though Frár owes them a debt of honour after his kinsman's betrayal. If the companions speak to Frár, they may come to an arrangement.

- YEAR 2962 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 9 OR 10

Events

King Thranduil sends a delegation of Wood Elves to Woodmen-town. If a new war-leader was elected in 2960, then the Elves pay homage to that leader with gems worth 50g. A small number of Men are travelling with the Elven delegation, to ease any discussion and negotiation; among them is Halbrech the Wineseller (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 86) and his twelve year-old daughter Hanna.

The Werewolf of Mirkwood continues to attack the settlements in the Western Eaves. This time, it is seen in the proximity of Rhosgobel. If Radagast is present, he drives it away; if the Wizard is absent, then the wolf leaps the hedge protecting Rhosgobel and spreads terror and death before it flees.

The Beornings attack the homestead of Viglund. They fight a great battle, and six of Viglund's sons are slain. Viglund himself flees the burning house and escapes west towards the Misty Mountains, never to be seen again. In a secret chamber under the house, the victors find the bodies of three strange Men wearing robes of foreign design. Among their devices, the bodies bear the sign of the Lidless Eye.

Adventuring Phase: Honour Among Thieves

For many years, the outlaw band under Geirbald Kinslayer has existed on the fringes of Woodman society. Geirbald and his ragtag group of outcasts and misfits roamed Mirkwood, hunting and fighting Orcs and Spiders. The company of Geirbald was a place where dishonoured or wayward warriors could find a home, where a man could cast away his old misdeeds and begin again (see *Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 92).

Geirbald's original band of thirteen has swelled to nearly fifty warriors and twice as many followers. Now, Geirbald is very old and tired and desires to return to Woodland Hall. He contacts the companions and asks them to come see him in his camp in Western Mirkwood, so that he may speak with them.

The Outlaw Camp

Geirbald's camp is more like a small town. While once Geirbald and his twelve wandered Mirkwood on wild adventure, now the outlaws are mostly settled. The camp is located in Western Mirkwood, approximately fifty miles north of Woodland Hall, and is surrounded by a stockade and several pens for grunting black pigs.

In the camp, any companion who played through *The Helm of Peace* may recognise Valdis (or her sister Valya, if Valdis

is dead) watching children at play. One of the children is hers, born of her union with her former lover Beldir (page 26). His name is Girion, and he is eleven years old.

Standing nearby is a slim young Woodman warrior who must have fairy blood in his ancestry, such is his grace and speed. This is Elfsigil, her new lover, who is accounted the best swordsman and archer among the outlaws. He smiles like a viper as the companions pass by. Valdis' raven Eágbitar still perches on her shoulder, cawing in the tongues of Men and Elves. It mockingly mimics the voices of the companions.

7 The Story of Geirbald

The companions are led towards a ramshackle longhouse where Geirbald waits for them. He has grown too weak recently to even leave his bed. Inside, Geirbald lies on a sleeping cot covered with furs. His skin is like thin paper; his eyes are bleary and white with cataracts. He beckons the Company closer and tells his tale.

Many years ago (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 92), Geirbald accidentally slew his sister with an arrow while hunting the Werewolf of Mirkwood. The Woodmen called him kinslayer, and Geirbald left his home for exile. There, he hunted the Werewolf for many years, but alas, he never caught the beast. He is too old now to continue the quest. He wants to go home to Woodland Hall one last time before he dies. Will the characters go to the Elders of Woodland Hall and beg them to allow Geirbald's return?

9 AT WOODLAND HALL

If they heed the request of the dying Geirbald, the companions meet with the council of Elders in Woodland Hall. Under the roof of Wuduseld they are permitted to speak in the outlaw's defence (the Loremaster should stage the meeting as a full-fledged Audience). The Elders are divided on the matter – some argue that Geirbald has punished himself enough with thirty years of exile, and that he should be allowed to die in the shadow of the hall. Others say that kinslaying, even unwitting kinslaying, is unforgivable.

When the encounter appears to be progressing and the council seems approaching a resolution, a final obstacle emerges: one Elder named Atarmud refuses to make a decision without further thought. He seems sympathetic, but refuses to vote in favour of allowing Geirbald to return. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Riddle)** check reveals the reason for his hesitancy – Atarmud was once betrothed to Geirbald's sister Geina, and loved both her and her brother deeply. Atarmud decides that he must consider the matter more deeply, and says that he will give his answer tomorrow.

That evening, a band of some thirty warriors emerges from the forest near Woodland Hall. Geirbald took a turn for the worse after the companions departed, and is clearly dying. The outlaws, led by Elfsigil, decided to carry him straight to Woodland Hall. They encamp outside the gates, waiting for permission to enter.

Atarmud & the Ghost 9

Tensions grow overnight between the followers of Geirbald and the warriors of Woodland Hall. The outlaws' beloved leader is dying, and his last request is a simple one. Everyone knows that Geirbald has fought for thirty years to make amend for his mistake – to refuse him now would be a horrible insult, and would forever destroy the uncertain bonds between the Woodmen and the outlaws.

In the black of night, Atarmud leaves Woodland Hall to go into the forest and visit his love's burial mound (the companions have a chance to notice him if they keep a watch). As he kneels there, he hears a whispered voice, telling him that his betrothed does not rest easily, and that Geirbald is still a murderer and a kinslayer who failed to atone for his sin when he abandoned the hunt for the Werewolf of Mirkwood. Amazed, Atarmud returns to Woodland Hall and tells of this prodigious event. Steeled by this ghostly visitation, Atarmud declares that he will vote against Geirbald's plea when the council meets tomorrow.

If the companions followed Atarmud, a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check lets them spot a big black bird flapping away from a tree close to the burial mound. The bird is Eágbitar, the raven ally of Valdis.

Convincing Atarmud that he was tricked is difficult, he is a proud, old man. But the companions may certainly devise a way, or work somehow to alleviate his concerns.

- If the Company could somehow capture Eágbitar without killing it, they could demonstrate how Atarmud was tricked by the talking bird. If they attempt to confront Valdis herself, however, she slips away into the woods – she has a greater part still to play.

- If the companions take a solemn oath to take on the quest to kill the Werewolf of Mirkwood, that could fulfil the demands of honour. Atarmud wants to let Geirbald die in the hall, but the 'ghost' reminded him of the oath of vengeance.

- In the absence of better options, the Company could sneak Geirbald into Woodland Hall under cover of darkness, so he can die in peace.

Geirbald's Dying Wish

If Geirbald dies in Woodland Hall, he whispers his last words to those around him, including the heroes.

"The beast has taken everything from me. Three times I fought it, and three times I was defeated – but a foresight is on me now! The beast will die… in a place where there are no shadows… in a time when there is no hope… and its death… will be the doom of the Forest. It must be slain! It must die… all things must pass from this world."

Pleased that Geirbald died peacefully, the outlaws return to their camp. A new leader is chosen from among their number – one of Geirbald's oldest followers, a grizzled, one-eyed hunter named Beral.

Vengeance of the Outlaws

If Geirbald dies outside Woodland Hall, then he does not pass gently. His last hours are marked with fevered dreams and moans of agony. His followers are infuriated by the sight of their leader dying within sight of his home, but denied the grace of passing inside Wuduseld. When the council of Elders finally make their decision, the outlaws are so angry that they draw swords, and Woodman spills Woodman blood outside the gates of the town. Three warriors from Woodland Hall die, and two of the outlaws perish (Elfsigil — an Outlaw Chief leads other Outlaws in the attack). The rest flee into the forest.

Elfsigil becomes leader of the outlaws, with Valdis as the clear power behind him. The outlaws become enemies of the Woodmen, and in years to come there are many raids and skirmishes between the two peoples.

Year's End

A hero who spent time with the outlaws may elect to join them. Eschewing home and kin, the companion joins the band of merry outlaws who dwell in Mirkwood and loses the respect of his home culture, but may also erase up to three Shadow points (including permanent Shadow!) as he leaves his old burdens and worries behind.

As an outlaw, the companion may not take the *Cultural Heirloom* Open Virtue.

- YEAR 2963 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 9 OR 10

Events

In this year, curious weeds grow in many places throughout Mirkwood. These thorny wild plants look black in the darkness of the trees, but have an eerie purplish shade when viewed under direct sunlight. The black pigs of the Woodmen find that the weeds are very tasty, but the plant is poisonous to both men and beasts and many pigs die after eating them. The weeds also crowd into farmland, choking fruit and crops.

After appearing at the last battle against the Viglundings in the form of a huge bear, Beorn leaves his hall and travels towards the Misty Mountains on a mysterious errand. A few among his followers say that after the Battle of Five Armies Beorn made a similar journey and that when he returned he welcomed Men to settle under his protection for the first time. Some of the Beornings worry that Beorn will change his mind upon his return, and will send them away.

Adventuring Phase: The Anger of the Elvenking

The delegation sent by the Elvenking to Woodmen-town returns to the Woodland Realm, bringing strange tidings to Thranduil. They speak of a great glowing lamp that hangs from the roof of the longhouse there, and that its light shines with a radiance they have not seen in an age of the world. Would it be possible that these Woodmen found and hid one of the lost lamps that once hung above the gates of Amon Lanc?

Thranduil dismisses the claim. He remembers those lamps of old, they were made of imperishable crystal, not glass and wood, like the lamp the envoys are describing. Then Hanna, the daughter of Halbrech the Wineseller steps forward and says that she heard old men and women in Woodmen-town tell stories of how their wondrous lamp was carried out of Dol Guldur by 'the Grey Wizard'...

This testimony causes an uproar in the hall. If all this should prove to be true, then the Woodmen could be accused of *stealing* one of the treasures of the Silvan Elves, of *deceiving* them by hiding it, and, worst of all, of *endangering* the Woodland Realm by not letting the lamp protect its borders. Why, if the Elves had the lamp they might never have been driven north of the Mountains of Mirkwood!

If the outrage was not enough, it could seem also that their "friends" the Wizards knew of this treachery. Mithrandir brought the lamp out of Dol Guldur, and the Brown Wizard lives not a day's march from the hall. They must have known and conspired to keep the lamp a secret! Some – especially those aligned with the Wayward Elves – argue that the Woodland Realm should rise in arms and march south to reclaim their stolen property. Thranduil raises his hands for silence. Mithrandir hid the lamp, and Mithrandir will explain himself. Let the word go forth – find Gandalf and bring him to the Halls of the Elvenking!

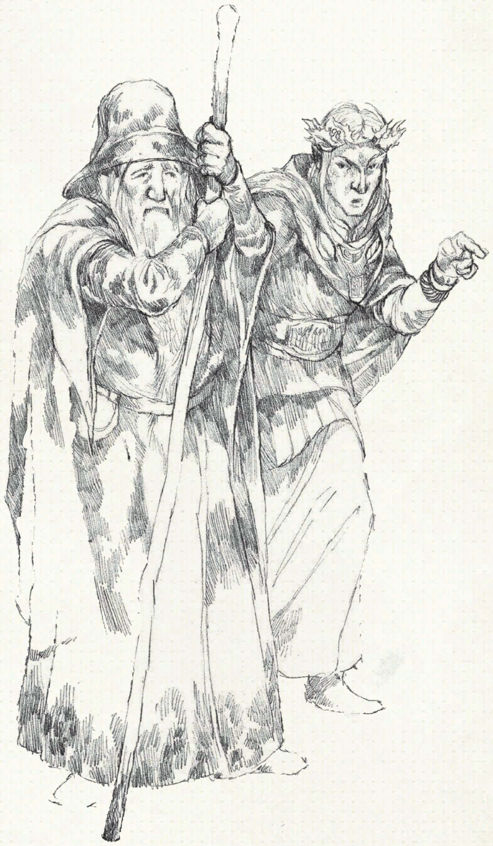
9 The Hunt for Gandalf

If the heroes were present in Thranduil's Halls when the envoys returned with their news, they may become involved in the hunt for Gandalf. The Elvenking promises to reward richly whoever brings news of the Wizard to him.

In 2963, Gandalf crosses over the Misty Mountains from Rivendell in the company of Aragorn and the sons of Elrond. The four cross into the land of the Beornings, hoping to visit Beorn, but find that he is gone. They then part company, with Gandalf and Aragorn travelling south to Rhosgobel. Aragorn continues south to enter into the service of King Thengel of Rohan, while Gandalf visits Radagast before travelling north along the forest eaves to the Forest Gate.

Upon leaving Rhosgobel Gandalf moves with haste – Radagast reported that his spies in Dol Guldur saw several riders leave the citadel and travel north in recent times. The Grey Pilgrim suspects the hand of Dol Guldur behind the actions of Viglund, and is bent to find out something about it. The longer he waits, the colder the trail becomes. Therefore, he does not welcome interruption.

The companions may encounter Gandalf anywhere along the Wizard's itinerary. If they intend to bring him to the Elvenking, they must either convince him to accompany them, or threaten him with the force of arms – Gandalf will not attack any of the Free Folk, but neither is he particularly pleased about being diverted from his mission.



If the characters tarry, Gandalf is found by the Silvan Elves first. The Company encounters the Wizard anywhere on the road from Rhosgobel to Thranduil's Halls, seemingly smoking his pipe alone while sitting on a rock or a fallen tree. Upon approaching Gandalf, the companions will discover that he is actually being escorted by a group of armed Elves of Mirkwood, and that their bows are pointed at the companions as they speak...

AT THRANDUIL'S COURT

The Elvenking might prefer to question Gandalf in private, but his followers are greatly wroth, so circumstances force his hand. Gandalf is questioned in the Halls of the Elvenking as though he was a prisoner.

Thranduil intends to find all that is to be known about this 'Lamp of Balthi'. Knowing that this day would come eventually, the Wizard sighs, and tells the full tale of how a young Woodman guided him to Dol Guldur, hundreds of years ago.

When the tale of the discovery is over, Gandalf admits openly that he gave the lamp to Balthi the Woodman of his own volition. He recounts also how he consulted with his cousin Radagast and conspired to conceal the lamp, but not from the Elves.

He explains:

"I was worried that the Enemy — the real Enemy — would try to reclaim it if he knew exactly where it was, and how could his Eye not be fixed perpetually upon the halls of those who created it?

"The lamp is indeed a potent weapon against the Shadow. But the Woodmen have the greater need in the coming war. Yes, war. Sauron has declared in Mordor. Soon, soon as the Elves reckon it, but perhaps even as Men reckon it, he will loose his gathering forces upon Middle-earth. Dol Guldur is rebuilt, and evil things dwell there again. Mirkwood will be a battleground.

"If the Elves reclaim the lamp, then the Woodmen will doubtless be destroyed. It will make the Woodland Realm stronger for a while, but in the end it will be an island of light surrounded by a sea of darkness, and it will founder and fall at the last.

"But I agree that now the choice belongs to the Elves. I have urgent errands elsewhere."

The Wizard strides out of the audience and walks to the magic gates of the Halls, which only open at the wish of Thranduil. The Elvenking pauses a moment, then lowers his eyes - the doors swing open.

"I will not imprison a Wizard, even if he has wronged us — and his words, though bitter, were not without wisdom. I need counsel, and time to think."

If the characters wish, they can speak to the court. Some Elves still want to take the lamp by force, others think they should demand that the Woodmen return it. Others prefer to wait, either heeding the words of Gandalf or arguing that the lamp has been missing for hundreds of years, so there is no need for a hasty decision. More worrying, though, are the many voices who argue that if Thranduil does not recover the lamp, it would be a betrayal of the Realm.

Thranduil makes no decision this year. However, he does send trusted agents to fetch Ormal the Lampmaker and bring him to Thranduil's court. The companions might be charged with this, especially if they studied with Ormal.

YEAR'S END

Companions spending the Fellowship phase in the Elvenking's Halls who didn't encounter the Lampmaker before may make his acquaintance and choose the *Study with the Lampmaker* undertaking (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 89).

- YEAR 2964 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 9 OR 10

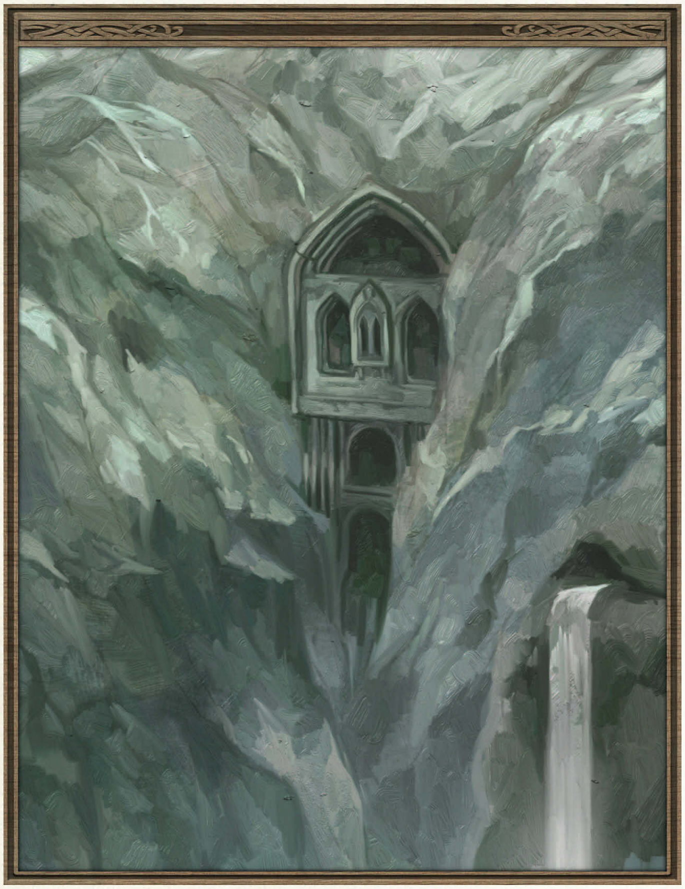
EVENTS

Escorted by Elven warriors, the Elf Ormal travels to Woodmen-town to see the Lamp of Balthi. If the companions knew or befriended the Lampmaker, or if the Elvenking trusts them, they may be asked to accompany him on the journey. Ormal is very interested in knowing any information the companions might have about the lamps.

Beorn and Gandalf return together from the far north. No more Orcs trouble the Beorning lands for some years. Beorn asks his people for counsel – should they welcome the surviving Viglundings into their houses or drive them away from the Vales of Anduin?

ADVENTURING PHASE: THE GREYDELVE

After many years, King Dáin finally listens to the petition of Frár the Beardless and the exiled Dwarves at Yule-tide in 2963. The kingdom of Erebor has grown strong enough to consider aiding Frár in retaking their ancestral home, the Greydelve. In the Great Chamber of Thrór, the King Under the Mountain speaks.



"Long have you waited, Frár son of Fráen, and many times have you asked for my aid in reclaiming what was yours. Now, I will answer, but you may not like all that I have to say.

"When I was but a stripling, I marched to war with my father Náin. We slew many Orcs and Goblins under the mountains, and came at last to the gates of Moria. There, we slew Azog and avenged the insult done to Thrór... and I looked upon the field and wept, for half of those who went to war lay dead or dying. Some counselled that we should march on and reclaim the halls of Durin, but to do so... to attempt that would have doomed us all.

"Now we have the Lonely Mountain again, and have grown strong and wealthy – but I saw how the strength of a people can be bled out in a single battle, and thus be diminished forever. I will give you back your halls, but I will not endanger my kingdom for honour or kinship alone.

"Here, then, are my conditions. First, you shall not be King of the Greydelve. You shall be Lord there, but you and yours will acknowledge me as your king.

"Second, you shall have such an army as we can gather, equipped with the best weapons from my armouries, but I will not take the strength of the Mountain. Long have you lived among the folk of the Wood – ask them for help. Yea, even the Elves.

"Third, to aid you, I give you a portion of my treasure hoard, gold and precious stones won by my cousin Thorin from the dragon. With this treasure you may hire warriors and sellswords, and they too shall be equipped from my armouries – but when the Greydelve is yours again, you shall labour to repay me."

Hearing this, Frár tears at his beard, and grows red, but he chokes down his anger and bows, for he knows that he will not get another chance at reclaiming his ancestor's halls.

GATHERING AN ARMY

In the months to follow, Frár visits Dale, Lake-town, the Halls of the Elvenking, the Beornings and the land of the Woodmen. In each place, he calls for warriors and adventurers to aid him. Those that join the fight will be paid in Dragon-gold and Dwarf-steel. He successfully hires many mercenaries in Lake-town, but needs more warriors.

Even if the companions do not join the quest, then they can speak for or against Frár's proposal. Those who go will be richly rewarded and gain valuable experience in battle – assuming they return...

RECLAIMING THE GREYDELVE

The campaign to reclaim the Greydelve takes many months. Most of those who take part in it will not return until late autumn in 2966. The Dwarf-hold was once a proud citadel atop an iron mine, but the Orcs took it long ago. Innumerable Goblins and Orcs of various kinds live there now. Trolls of diverse varieties are their allies and perhaps even fouler things without name wait in the darkness below.

If the companions join Frár's army, then they face pitched battles in the shadow of the Grey Mountains, followed by dungeon crawling through the dark mines as they seek out the last of the Orcs. While Frár is victorious at first, the bigger danger lies behind him...

9 The Treachery of Men

Many of the mercenaries believe that the Greydelve conceals some vast treasure, and once the battle is won, they plot to murder Frár. If the companions are present, they may have a chance to save him.

- If the companions are not present, or cannot save Frár, the the dwarf-lord is murdered and there is terrible strife among the victors. The mercenaries are killed by Dáin's warriors, but Frár's kin blame Dáin for failing to protect Frár. The surviving exiled Dwarves banish everyone else from the Greydelve and shut the doors.
- If the Company saves Frár, then the Greydelve is reclaimed successfully and becomes an ally of Erebor.

9 Year's End

If the Greydelve is recovered, then it can be opened as a Sanctuary (see page 201 of the *Player's Guide*). Dwarves who settle there may be granted a holding of unusual promise — after tending to their holding, heroes start with a Rating of +2. Others might win holdings as well, but these are in the broken lands outside of the Greydelve and follow the regular rules (gaining a Rating of +0 once the holding is established by the first Tend to Holding undertaking).

- Year 2965 -

for heroes of level 10 or 11

Events

If Ormal the Lampmaker was allowed to enter Woodmen-town and see the Lamp of Balthi, he takes residence there and spends long months studying the wondrous artefact. While suspicious at first, the Woodmen let him do as he likes, as the lamp seems to glow brighter since the day Ormal has started to inspect it.

A band of Dwarves travelling along the Elf-path are going to join Bofri son of Bofur (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 93) in his quest to reclaim the Old Forest Road; unfortunately, they are waylaid by Spiders and lose their path. This misfortune turns on its head when they come upon a stream running down from the Mountains of Mirkwood whose bed glitters with gold.

Many of the Viglunding warriors and cottars defeated by the Beornings migrate south. Some settle in the fertile lands west of the Western Eaves and trade with the Woodmen; others settle even further south, and pay tribute to the Tyrant's Hill.

Adventuring Phase: The Theft of the Lamp

Several days before the beginning of Yule-tide, a band of Wayward Elves arrives in the Western Eaves (optionally, led by Ruithel - see page 18). They meet with Ormal the Lampmaker and his retinue, and feast in an oak grove near Woodmen-town. The coming of so many of the Fair Folk so close to the Yule-tide festival is seen as a good omen by the Woodmen. Three of these Elves are especially notable. All three are young as Elves reckon years, and all three are fey and wild.

- The leader of the trio is Duvainiel, a dark-haired Elf-maiden of some four hundred years. Despite her youth, she is noted for the strength of her will, and she has mastered arts that normally take many centuries to learn — she has mastered all three forms of Wood-elf Magic (see the *Player's Guide*, page 108) to an unusual degree.

- Her younger brother Oldir is next in age. He is tall for a Silvan Elf, and unusually strong. Unlike his moonpale sister, Oldir is tanned and muscular, for he is one of the Raft-elves who travel down to Lake-town regularly. It is important that the companions discover Oldir's talents as a boatsman before *The Festival*, below.
- Third is Tinuhel. At only a hundred years old, she is one of the youngest Elves in all Mirkwood, for the Firstborn have few children. She is the wildest of the three, and the strangest. Her mood changes swiftly, like wild-born ripples breaking the tranquillity of a forest pool. She has little time for the ways of mortals, and considers Men and Orcs to be equally brutish and stupid.

If any of the companions are in Woodmen-town around midsummer, they meet these Elves. Duvainiel studies with the Lampmaker, while the other two make mischief in Woodmen-town.

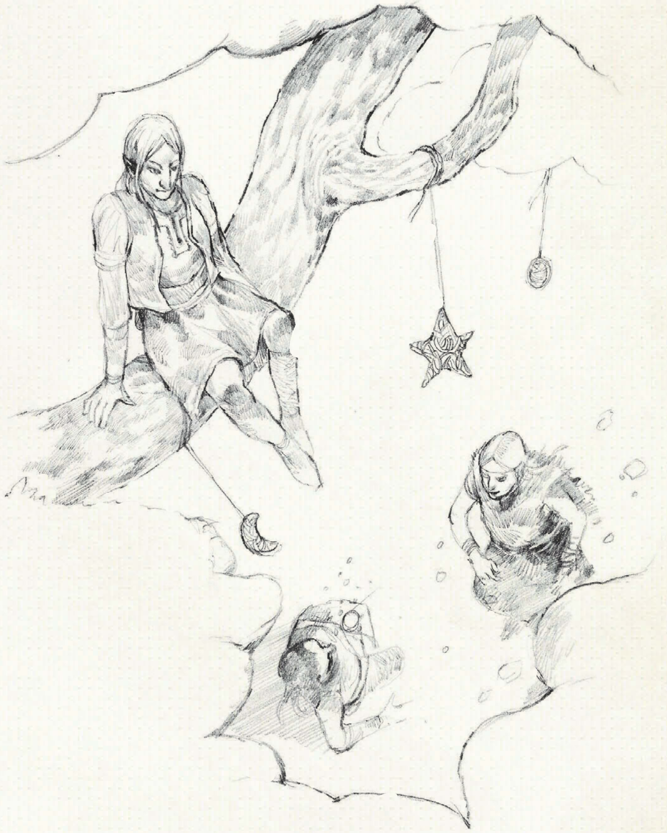
The Festival

The Woodmen of Mirkwood hold a feast at Midsummer every year. They light torches and hang them from the boughs of the trees, trying to drive away the gloom for one day. It is a festival of light and hope, and reaffirms their belief that one day the Shadow will be lifted and the wood will again become green. It is a day for weddings and betrothals, for song and dance, for celebration and trade. Many come from the other Houses to visit Woodmen-town this day.

That night, the Elders of the Houses gather in the Great Hall. There, tales are told, songs sung and matters of import both small and large are discussed over many horns of drink. The Beornings gifted the feast with bread and mead, and the delegation of the Elvenking that visited Woodmen-town three years ago left behind some barrels of good wine, so there is much rejoicing.

Then, at the height of the feast, the Lamp of Balthi flares with a sudden light. Every eye is drawn to the blazing lamp. A moment later, the light of the lamp is suddenly snuffed out, plunging the hall into darkness — and everyone in the hall into an unnatural slumber, as Duvainiel's Elf-magic, augmented by the power of the lamp, takes hold. As they fall asleep, the characters hear the musical laughter of an Elf-maiden...

When they awake, the Lamp of Balthi is gone. When Duvainiel's magic put the feasters to sleep, the three Wayward Elves entered the Great Hall and carried it away.



Chasing the Thieves

The disappearance of the Lamp of Balthi is a terrible blow for Woodmen-town. When despair finally gives way to suspicion and anger, the Woodmen immediately blame the Elves. If the war-leader of the Woodmen is present, then the Woodmen look to him for leadership in this dark hour. If there is no war-leader at the feast, then various Woodmen warriors of renown start taking action, helped by their respective followers. Some march straight for the camp of the Lampmaker and take him and his guards hostage. Others spread out into the forest, looking for signs of the Elves. Most hunters assume that the thieves fled north, back towards the Woodland Realm. If there are any Elves of

Mirkwood in the Company, then they may be detained or even attacked by infuriated Woodmen.

A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** check leads to the docks, where one of the boats that was tied up there is missing. If the companions can divine where they were headed (foresight, a friendly raven, a clever use of a Virtue, a **DC 20 Intelligence (Riddle)** check) they find that the Elves are going south along the Dusky River.

Chasing the Elves south in haste can be resolved as a group check (**DC 15**). Eligible skills are **Investigation, Nature, Riddle** or **Survival**. The fugitive Elves have a distinct advantage over the Company and planned their misdeed carefully.

Eventually (probably the next morning) the companions find the stolen boat caught in weeds in the middle of the river. As they approach, one of the River-maidens rises from the water and points towards the east bank – the Heart of Mirkwood. She tells the Company that the Elves went into the dark woods, and are bound for the tree called the Eilian oak, the Skybridge tree. This is one of the taller trees in the region, and once marked an old Elf-path that ran from Amon Lanc to their refuge in the Mountains of Mirkwood (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 97).

As they travel, the companions notice the forest changing. The atmosphere in the Heart of Mirkwood seems less dark and unfriendly, while the Western Eaves seem to dim by the hour, as the shadows lengthen visibly. Have the heroes conduct another group check as above in order to follow the Elves into the Heart.

As they follow the Elves through the forest, companions succeeding in **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)** checks find signs but not those left by the thieves. Someone else is hunting them! From the tracks, the Wayward Elves are being pursued by a pack of Wargs, and the wild wolves are lead by a much bigger creature. There are other tracks, too – the booted footprints of a big man.

From ahead, the companions hear a howl.

10 Battle at the Skybridge Tree

The companions arrive at the clearing around the Eilian oak and discover that the Wayward Elves are trapped by wolves. Oldir and Duvainiel have fallen back against a large rock a few yards from the tree: Oldir wields a spear to keep the wolves at bay, while his sister's bow sings. Already two Wargs lie dead, but many more circle them (there are twice as many Wild Wolves as heroes, pg 111 of the *Loremaster's Guide*).

Young Tinuhel has retreated into a cave-like gap between the roots of the Skybridge oak, carrying a heavy leather sack. The Lamp of Balthi must be within. The Elf intended to hang the Lamp from the tall tree, but she was surprised by the ambush before she could climb it.

In front of the gap where Tinuhel is trapped is one gigantic wolf-creature, whose eyes gleam with unholy fire. It is the Werewolf of Mirkwood.

When the companions arrive, the Werewolf turns to attack them, while the other wolves concentrate on keeping the Elves trapped where they are. If the Werewolf is slain, it possesses another one of the wolves nearby (see page 96 of the *Rhovanion Region Guide*).

The Company may call out to Tinuhel to let the light of the Lamp shine on the wolf, or to use it as a distraction or a weapon against the monster. Should they do so, the Ringwraith comes…

The Coming of the Nazgûl 10

While Tinuhel fumbles with the sack, a dark figure steps out of the shadow of the trees. It is man-shaped, and wears a suit of heavy mail like some black knight out of the East, but no face is visible in the visored darkness of the helm. A long sword of steel gleams in one gauntleted hand.

A Ringwraith has come: the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur himself. When the Wayward Elves stole the Lamp the Werewolf of Mirkwood immediately took notice, and the Nazgûl rode out to investigate. Now, the Lamp is almost in his grasp. The Ringwraith turns to face the companions, while the Werewolf of Mirkwood attacks Tinuhel to take the Lamp.

If the companions intend to face the Werewolf of Mirkwood AND the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, they have little hope of victory. Escaping without much loss will be equally difficult. The heroes might:

- **Flee!** If the companions abandon the Elves and flee, they will be unhindered in their effort to leave the battlefield. The Werewolf kills Tinuhel and the Nazgûl takes the Lamp. The companions will have a chance to regain the Lamp in *Return to Dol Guldur* (see page 83) but for the moment the treasure of the Woodmen is lost.

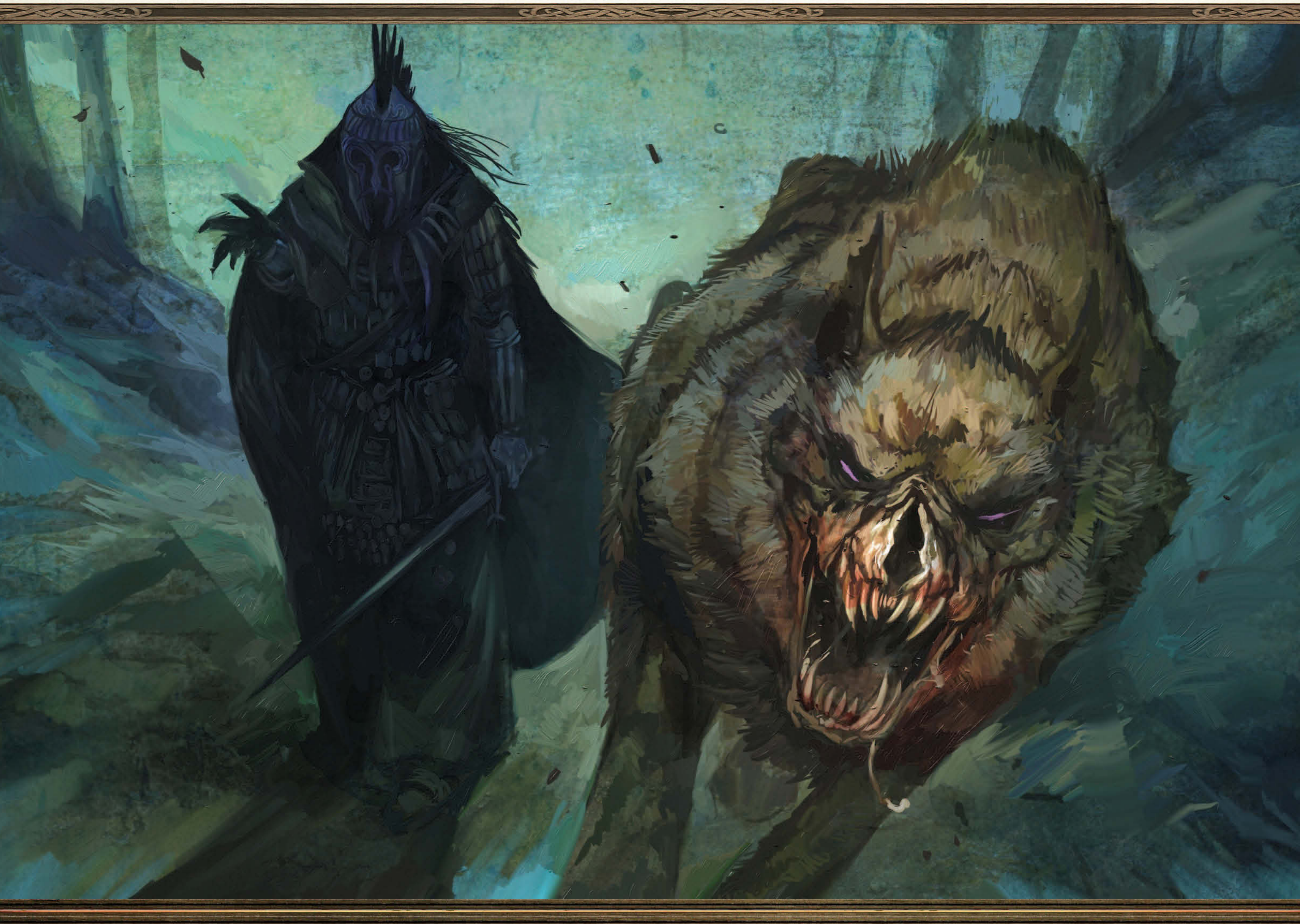
- **Uncover the Lamp!** If at least one hero engages the Werewolf in melee, then Tinuhel can use her action to remove the Lamp and light it. This means the hero will face the Werewolf alone this round. The uncovered Lamp allows all heroes to gain Inspiration. Furthermore, while the Lamp is lit, the companions have Advantage and their foes have Disadvantage on attack rolls. This effect ends if the Lamp is extinguished for any reason.

Aftermath

When the companions return to Woodmen-town, they hear stories of Orc raids in several places along the Western Eaves. It seems as though the forces of Dol Guldur took advantage of the dimming of the Lamp of Balthi to attack.

The Orcs took several prisoners, including, perhaps, people close to the companions: friends, family members, even rivals might have been captured by the Orcs.

If the companions successfully recovered the Lamp of Balthi, then they are welcomed as heroes by the Woodmen. Any holdings among the Woodmen increase their Rating by 1 immediately (to a maximum of +6), and Woodmen heroes might be considered worthy of raising a *Hound of the West* (see below).



Year's End

Legends say that sometimes a hound is born in Mirkwood whose lineage hearkens back to the wondrous beasts that followed Béma, tamer of animals, when he came to Middle-earth from West over Sea. Those hounds were gifted with greater cunning and strength, and some could even speak with words.

A Woodman companion who has laboured tirelessly in defense of the Western Eaves and already possesses the *Hound of Mirkwood* virtue might be given a special pup to raise. When first given the hound, the character must spend the whole Fellowship phase weaning the pup and training it.

A Hound of the West works just like a regular Hound of Mirkwood, with the following special abilities:

- **Tearing Jaws:** Add your Proficiency Bonus to the **DC** for the required **Strength** saving throw effect when it bites an enemy.

- **Bane of Wolves:** Wargs and Wolves of the Wild have a special dread of the Hounds of the West – when such a hound is involved in a fight, any Warg-kind must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or be Frightened of the hound.

- **Speech of Mortals:** Three times in its life, the Hound of the West will speak in the Common Tongue.

All is Lost

If it seems as though all is lost and the entire Company is about to perish, a kind Loremaster can consider the intervention of a powerful Loremaster character (a Patron, for example) to rescue them. This sort of deus ex machina is never the best way to go, and should be employed only if the players have done something to reasonably prompt this intervention. A Wizard always arrives precisely at the right moment, after all.

Any Wizard, but probably Radagast or Gandalf: The Lamp bursts into a blinding flash that even burns through the sack (if the Lamp is still covered) and seems to freeze everything in a blue radiance. The Ringwraith and the Werewolf are temporarily dismayed, and the companions may take the opportunity to flee (but must leave the Lamp).

Saruman: The White Wizard steps into the clearing and stands before the Nazgûl. One of the Wargs snarls at him. Saruman glances at it, and the beast whimpers and flees. When the Nazgûl raises his sword, Saruman commands the Lamp to burn. The bag bursts into flame, as does the fur of the wolves nearby.

Beorn: Beorn secretly attended the festival at Woodmen-town (well, as secretly as a mountain of a skinchanging man-bear can be). He followed the Company into the woods when they went in pursuit of the Elves. He bursts into the clearing and charges the Skybridge tree itself, uprooting it with a mighty effort and toppling it down onto the Werewolf and the Ringwraith.

Thranduil: The Elvenking learned that the wild Wayward Elves left his domain, and realised what mischief they intended. He rode out with some of his warriors, and as they drew near to Woodmen-town they sensed the movements of the Lamp. Though Thranduil is not Elrond or Galadriel, nor Thingol of old nor even his father Oropher, there is yet power within him, and these are still his woods. Dismayed, the Ringwraith flees.

- Year 2966 -

for heroes of level 10 or 11

Events

Rumours of gold in the Mountains of Mirkwood draw many adventurers, mostly unemployed sell-swords that were part of the army that went to the Greydelve in 2964. Few of the new visitors find the gloomy woods welcoming, and some perish or go missing in the wooded hills. Still, seven enterprising Dwarves and their followers establish a mining camp some miles east of the source of the Enchanted Stream. They find little gold, so they start searching the Elven ruins in the mountains looking for buried treasure.

Quarrels with the Wayward Elves grow after the events of last year. Thranduil punishes Tinuhel, Oldir and Duvainiel (or, at least, those who survived) by sending them to guard the northern frontier. Other Elves are displeased by the miners and ruffians attracted by the tales of gold in the hills to the south.

If Radagast went missing and left after the events of *Saving the Maiden* (page 53) then he returns this year. If he left because of his grief, for several weeks he appears as if he forgot the art of human speech — he speaks only in grunts and animal noises, mixed with a few words of High-elven. If he left after breaking his staff, he returns with a new one, wearing cleaner robes and a lofty demeanour, courtesy of long years studying under Saruman the White.

Word comes from the East Bight that a sickness stalks the followers of Ceawin of Sunstead. Many have died, and many more are ill. He calls for aid from the healers of the Woodmen.

Adventuring Phase: Return to Dol Guldur

Having learned of the Orc-raids that occurred last Yule, Radagast sends more of his birds and beasts to spy upon Dol Guldur. He soon discovers that many prisoners (and the Lamp of Balthi, if it was stolen) are currently locked in Fenbridge Castle (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 120) — heavy rains made the swamps around the area virtually impassable, even across the narrow bridge of stone that links Fenbridge Castle to Dol Guldur, but the prisoners will soon be moved to the dark hold. If the companions are to have any hope of rescuing those who were lost, this is their best opportunity to do so.

Rescuing the Prisoners

Someone of authority (a patron, perhaps) summons the Company to Rhosgobel early that spring. If any of the companions travelled with Radagast before (for example, sixteen years before - see *Secrets Buried*, page 20) then it is the Brown Wizard who personally insists on seeing them with urgency; the same happens if any hero is a relative of one of those companions.

Once in Rhosgobel, the companions meet with Radagast, and there they must prepare a plan to rescue the prisoners. The following matters are discussed:

- Dol Guldur is fully rebuilt, and is again a place of terror. If the prisoners reach the black hold, the chances of rescuing them become desperate. The best opportunity for success is to intercept them as they make their way through the swampy woodlands north of the fortress.

- The Orcs use the Fenbridge to get to Dol Guldur — a winding path of some twenty miles through the marshes. This is the only safe path through the bogs.

- The prisoners will probably be sick, weak and scared. If they are to be rescued, then the companions will need to have a plan to get them safely across the wilderness.

- The nearest refuge in Mirkwood is the Tyrant's Hill (assuming that Mogdred is an ally of the Woodmen). Another option would be to exit the forest going west, into the Vales of Anduin. Mirkwood is perilous, but it may be easier to slip away from pursuers in the darkness of the woods than in the open terrain of the Vales.

Radagast believes that the best approach is to cause a distraction while the prisoners are rescued. His talents lie more in the fields of hiding and healing, so he thinks that he should accompany the party sent to rescue the prisoners.

If Gandalf is present, then he volunteers to create a diversion. "I have some small talent with fireworks," he says, puffing on his pipe.

Beorn, if present, grunts and says that he will make sure that all the watchers in Dol Guldur are looking the wrong way at the right time.

If none of these are present, then the companions must come up with their own distraction. They might seek out help (from Beorn, Thranduil or some other power), gather forces to launch a sortie against Dol Guldur, or plan to attack some other outpost of the enemy such as the Tyrant's Hill or Fenbridge Castle).

To Fenbridge Castle

Radagast the Brown accompanies the companions and his arts make the journey shorter and less dangerous. Assuming the journey starts at Black Tarn Hall, it then covers forty miles across the Narrows of the Forest, then the Company trudges through fifty miles of deep forest across Southern Mirkwood. It takes the Company two weeks at a Peril Rating of 5 with 1d2+1 Journey Events for the heroes to arrive in sight of Fenbridge Castle. As soon as the Company reaches its destination, each companion will have to pass a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption every day.

If the companions encounter any spies or agents of the enemy, then they must take care to ensure that word of their presence does not reach Dol Guldur – secrecy is all-important if this rescue is to be successful.

As the companions draw closer to the Fenbridge, each hero must make a **DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth)** check to avoid being spotted by an Orc patrol. In case of a failure, the Company is chased through the trees. The heroes must either evade the Orcs, or turn and slay them all.

At the Fenbridge

Ahead, the moss-stained walls of Fenbridge Castle rise from the murk. The castle is built on the remains of itself. The towers and walls sink slipshod into the soft ground, and when one topples, the Orcs build on top of the ruins. One day, the castle will have a firm foundation of its own past incarnations, but that time is far ahead in the future. Now, Fenbridge is a ramshackle hulk of stone and wood, a fortress that rots from within. Orcs watch from its walls, and bats flitter overhead. The howling of Wargs masks the moans of the unfortunate slaves trapped within its grim walls.

Fenbridge Castle has two gates. One faces north-east, the other south-west. A path, now mostly overgrown, runs up to the north-east gate. The Fenbridge itself leads out from the southern gate. At the start, the bridge is a causeway supported by stone pillars dug deep into the mire, and stands more than a dozen feet above the surrounding terrain. Later, the path drops into the swamp and it becomes hard to tell stone from sucking mud.

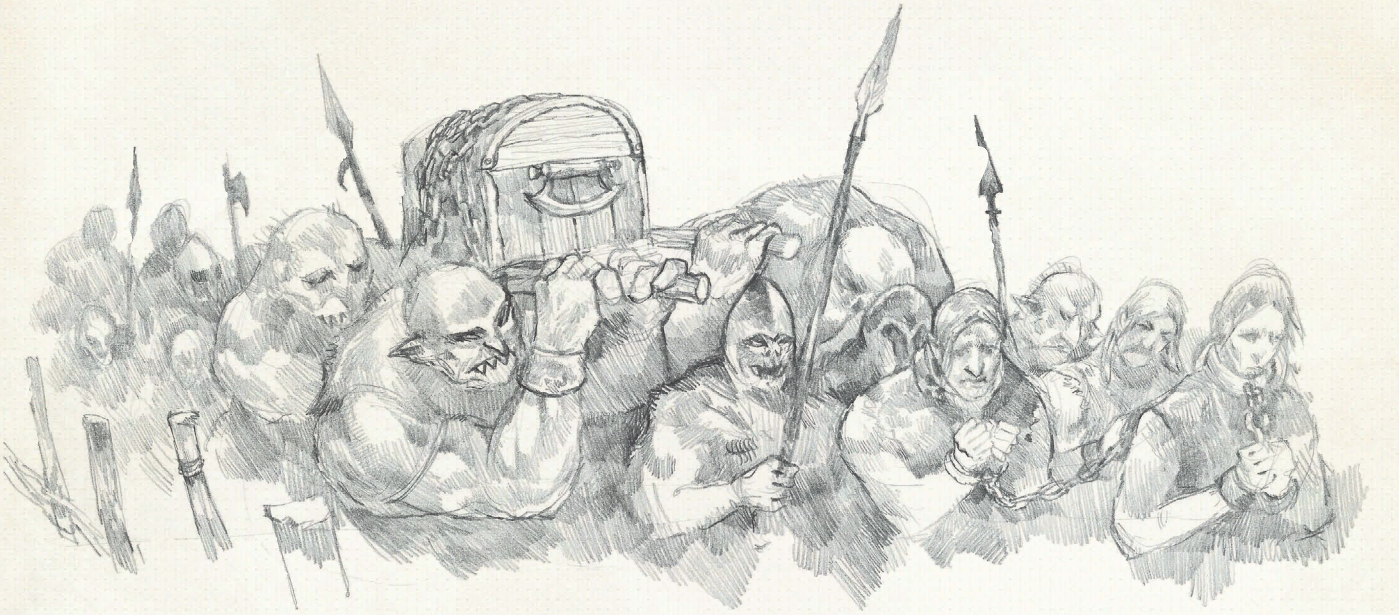
A black squirrel darts out of the trees and bids the Company to follow it. This is one of Radagast's creatures, and it leads the Company through a narrow defile in the woods that conceals their passage from the sentries in the Fenbridge. The defile leads to the edge of the marsh. For as far as the eye can see (admittedly, in Mirkwood, that usually means "to the end of your arm on a good day") is a wasteland of stagnant pools, mud, weeds and tangled roots. Off to the left, the Fenbridge runs south, and the Company can see the occasional flare of torchlight as Orcs patrol it.

Stalking the Foe

One wet and misty morning, the prisoners leave the castle in chains. The grim procession is guarded by a dozen Orc soldiers, six Orc Guards and a mean-looking Hill-Troll Chief carrying a spiked buckler of iron. (If the Lamp of Balthi was captured, then in place of the Hill-Troll Chief there are two Hill-Trolls carrying a heavy chest between them).

There are fifteen chained prisoners. Most of them were taken when the enemy attacked the Woodmen last Yule; others were captured several years ago. If any of the Company's allies or kin were kidnapped or disappeared in previous adventures, they may be among the prisoners. Maghaz himself leads the group, although the canny old Orc is careful to have a pair of big Orc Guards at the head of the procession, while he stays near the Hill-troll (or Trolls) – if any sneaky Elf archer is in the woods, he'd prefer for someone else to take the place of honour and any associated arrow!

The prisoners travel around five miles per day, as both Orcs and prisoners are laden with heavy loads. This means it



takes the convoy almost four days to move through the swamps to Dol Guldur.

- The area around Dol Guldur makes for exceedingly hard going. Every companion must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption. A failure with a natural '1' means that the heroes must each make a **DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth)** saving throw or be spotted by the Orcs.

The companions can choose to launch their ambush at any time. If they wait for a day or two, then it will be unlikely that Maghaz will receive reinforcements from Dol Guldur or Fenbridge Castle, but they will be right in the middle of the marsh with their rescued prisoners.

10 THE AMBUSH

When the companions are ready, then Radagast sends a sparrow to signal the time to attack to whatever allies lie in wait to cause a diversion. An hour later, the distraction begins. In the distance, the companions hear the sound of whatever they have agreed to make happen. The diversion is aimed at the watchful eyes in Dol Guldur and Fenbridge Castle, not at the Orcs guarding the prisoners.

The Orc procession halts on a little grassy hillock. Maghaz sends three Orc-guards off to investigate, while he commands the Orc Soldiers to get into a defensive position on the hillock. The prisoners are made to sit on top of it, while the Orcs form a ring around the prisoners, facing out, while Maghaz and the remaining three Orc Guards keep order inside. The Hill-troll takes position on the causeway (if there are two Trolls, one remains close to the hillock, guarding the chest containing the Lamp).

Attempting to ambush the Orcs in their defensive position would be a difficult fight. Luckily for them, Radagast has something in mind: he starts whistling softly using a small clay flute, and in a short while the whole forest surrounding the Orcs and the Company comes alive with the chirping of birds, the croaking of frogs and the hissing of snakes. The echo of the animal voices is so bewildering that if the companions attack now, they will Surprise their foes. Still, the companions face stiff opposition. They will require all their strength, heart and wits to overcome their enemies.

The Chest of the Lamp

If the Company recapture the Lamp, they find it is locked inside a heavy chest. A companion can make a DC 20 Dexterity check to pick the lock. If the companions cannot open the chest, they will have to carry it: it is so heavy and awkward that the hero's speed is reduced by 20 feet and the hero has Disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls and saving throws that use Strength, Dexterity or Constitution.

8

Escape!

Once the companions rescue the prisoners, they can flee across the marsh. It takes two days to reach the edge of the marsh if the companions ambushed the Orcs near Fenbridge Castle or Dol Guldur, or four days if they ambushed the Orcs midway through the march across the causeway. This stage has a 1 Journey Event with a Peril Rating of 5.

At the edge of the swamp, the companions have a choice. If they head straight West in order to gain open ground, they must face 1 more Journey Event at Peril Rating 5. Once they reach open ground, they will be pursued (see below) until they reach Rhosgobel or another Sanctuary.

Otherwise, the heroes must make their way through the Narrows of the Forest to the Western Eaves. This will take ten days and produces 1d2 Journey Events with a Peril Rating of 4. They will be pursued as well, although they will have a greater chance to elude their foes.

For the length of their flight, each time a companion rolls a natural '1', a prisoner has succumbed to the dangers of the escape. They must either be carried (causing a hero's movement to be reduced by 10 feet and possibly increasing the overall travel time) or abandoned. Leaving behind an exhausted survivor causes each hero to gain 5 Shadow points.

8

Pursuit!

Dol Guldur does not let its prisoners go so easily. Once the surviving Orcs raise the alarm, the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur storms out of the fortress with Wild Wolves and Snaga Trackers in his wake. Each day, the companions must pass a group check with each hero making either a **Wisdom (Survival)** or **Dexterity (Stealth)** check to evade their pursuers; the **DC** for these checks is **13** in Mirkwood or **15** on open ground. Three successful group checks in a row means they have evaded the hunters; three failed checks means the enemy catches them.

If the companions manage to return home with the prisoners and the recovered Lamp, they are hailed as heroes by the folk of the Wood. A feast is held in their honour: heroes with holdings in the area have their Holding Upkeep check DC reduced by 2.

The Lamp is Lost

If disaster strikes and the Lamp of Balthi is lost to the shadows of Dol Guldur, then the companions will have to recover it somehow, or the woods will soon be lost to the Shadow. Fortunately, the secret passageway used by Gandalf to enter Dol Guldur is still open, so the companions can creep into the tunnels under the Hill. Surviving and escaping that hellish place, though, is extremely unlikely.

Year's End

10

Companions who took part in the saving of the prisoners from Dol Guldur and who do not belong to the Woodmen may choose the Receive Title (Hero of the Woodmen) undertaking this year (see page 201 of the *Player's Guide* and below).

Receive Title (Hero of the Woodmen)

The companion is invited by the Council of Elders to become a member of the folk of the Woodmen, as a recognition for his deeds. To accept the title, the adventurer must spend the Fellowship phase in any Woodman settlement of the Western Eaves and choose the Receive Title undertaking.

The hero can freely dwell in a guest-house in Woodmen-town, or in a cottage in Rhosgobel, or maybe even in a tree-house in Woodland Hall (or in a house in Black Tarn Hall or Sunstead). The comfort of the lodging should be proportionate to the character's Standard of Living.

the years of the plague:
- 2967-2974 -

Mirkwood is plagued by a wasting sickness that claims innumerable lives. The Woodland Realm is besieged by evil creatures from the Mountains of Mirkwood, and the paths through the forest are threatened. The power in Dol Guldur stirs and shakes the foundations of all realms in Wilderland.

- year 2967 -

for heroes of level 11 or 12

Events

One of the smaller settlements in the East Bight vanishes during the winter. Scouts from Sunstead find that the village was abandoned, but there are no clear signs as to why nearly a hundred settlers fled their homes. Carved into one post in the longhouse, though, are the runes for the word "Raegenhere".

Many throughout Mirkwood (those with a Shadow rating of 3 or more) suffer from terrible dreams this year. They are tormented by visions of death and suffering, including the deaths of family members and friends. Companions afflicted by these dreams must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption, gaining 1 Shadow point upon a failure.

For several weeks in the autumn of this year, the magic of the Elvenking seems to fail. Spiders swarm onto the Elf-path, occupying a long stretch of the track from the Enchanted Stream to the edge of Western Mirkwood.

Adventuring Phase: Treachery in the Woods

This adventure takes place in Thranduil's Halls in the Woodland Realm. If the companions are regular visitors to the Halls, then they may be in attendance at the Elvenking's court when this adventure begins. Otherwise, they may be visiting the court on other business, or be part of King Bard's mission to the Elves. After recent troubles, King Bard decides to court the favour of his ally, the Elvenking. He dispatches a group of nobles and ambassadors from Dale to bring gifts to Thranduil, and to discuss the quarrels with the foresters along the eastern eaves of the Woodland Realm and other disputes. Emissaries also go from Lake-town and — grudgingly — from Erebor.

The envoys gather in Esgaroth, then take a boat through the marshes and up the Forest River to the gates of the Halls, where they wait for an audience with the Elvenking.

11 Affairs of Court

Attending the Elvenking's court is an Audience; Thranduil's Motivation and Expectations are given on page 84 of the *Rhovanion Region Guide*. If the companions wish to discuss matters of war or security, then he listens attentively: heroes who propose plans to fortify the Woodland Realm gain a +**1** modifier, those who accuse the Elvenking of isolationism receive a -**2** modifier. On matters of trade, lore or the cause of the growing darkness, he is willing to listen but only extraordinary results will move Thranduil — his heart is heavy with some dark foreboding but he does not know the shape of things yet. The Company may also have business with the delegates from Dale or Lake-town.

The visitors are feasted and entertained by the Elves for two days. Notably, old Halbrech the Wineseller – now nearly sixty years old and a source of fascination for the immortal Elves – breaks out the finest vintages, including a special treat brought from over the Misty Mountains and far away: a few bottles of wine from the vineyards of the Southfarthing in the Shire! If they never met her before, Halbrech also introduces his daughter Hanna to the visitors. She is now seventeen years old, and serves as her father's scribe and assistant; it is clear that Halbrech intends for Hanna to take over the role his grandfather and father held before him.

3 The Treachery of the Wineseller

Secretly, Halbrech has once again fallen under the Shadow. Many years ago, he was a spy in the Elvenking's Halls (see the adventure *Secrets Buried*, page 20), and now the Ringwraiths of Dol Guldur have called on him to serve again. The Woodland Realm is too strong to assault directly, but it can still fall to treachery.

The Messenger of Mordor himself rode to the Woodland Realm, and one foggy night the black-cloaked figure met Halbrech in a spot near the village of the Raft-elves. After many years without contact with the Shadow the wineseller was overwhelmed with terror, and accepted trembling a vial of poison from the gauntleted hands of the Ringwraith, along with precise instructions on how to employ it.

The plan is to poison the Elvenking's own reserve of Dorwinion wine, the one meant for the king's feasts only. This special vintage will be served at the end of the second day of the gathering, to celebrate any treaty or agreement the envoys may have stipulated with the Elvenking - or to sweeten the bitter taste of failure. The council will be restricted to the more important envoys, and Halbrech plans to leave his daughter Hanna out of it, to avoid any risk of her tasting the poisoned wine. This concern, added to the wine-seller's great fear of the Ringwraiths, makes Halbrech extremely nervous and unusually gloomy. A successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight)** check made during the first day of the gathering notices that Hanna seems concerned about her father's health, although Halbrech seems hale and strong for a man of his years.

A Cup of Poison

The attendants of the second day of the council are the most important notables sent from Dale, Esgaroth and Erebor. At this point of the campaign, it is difficult to determine who exactly these prominent personalities are, but the Loremaster should make sure these are figures known to the companions, and possibly dear to them. The Elvenking is included among them. It is also likely that the heroes themselves are counted in the restricted council, if their renown allows for it. All who take part in the council risk their lives, as the assassination attempt aims to rob the folks of the North of several dignitaries in one fell blow.

A Loving Daughter

The companions have a better chance to avoid this dreadful fate if they befriend Halbrech's daughter Hanna (or if they befriended her on a previous occasion). Hanna is very worried about her father. He is nothing like his usual self, a change that is escaping both the guests and the Elves, who rarely concern themselves with the moods of mortals, but something that a loving daughter will never fail to notice. If the companions confront Halbrech before the end of the second day, the wineseller first denies everything, then tries to ascertain if the heroes are capable of keeping his daughter safe; as his actions will demonstrate, he has already forfeited his own life (see *Halbrech's Fate*, overleaf), but might reconsider bringing his plan to completion if he is convinced that Hanna has nothing to fear from the retaliation of the Messenger of Mordor - the Ringwraith promised to torture and slay him and his family if he refused to carry out the treacherous plan.

11 A Bitter Hour

If the companions remain completely oblivious to what is happening behind their backs, then disaster strikes. Everyone who drinks from the poisoned wine contracts a fierce form of the malady known as the **Black Shadow** (see page 127) and slips into a fevered sleep lasting several days.

- A companion who drinks the poison is Unconscious for eight days. Each day the hero must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or gain 1 Shadow point (this is reduced to **DC 10** if tended to by someone familiar with *The Weapons of the Enemy* (see the *Player's Guide*, page 68). If the victim's Shadow rating overcomes his **Wisdom** score before the end of the eight-day period, then the character slips into ever deeper dreams and dies. If the victim resists for eight days, he finally overcomes his sickness and wakes up (but maintains the new Shadow score).

- All non-player characters who took part in the council becomes violently sick and eventually die. If the Loremaster needs a random method to determine who lives or dies then each victim may make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw with Disadvantage, surviving only if they succeed.

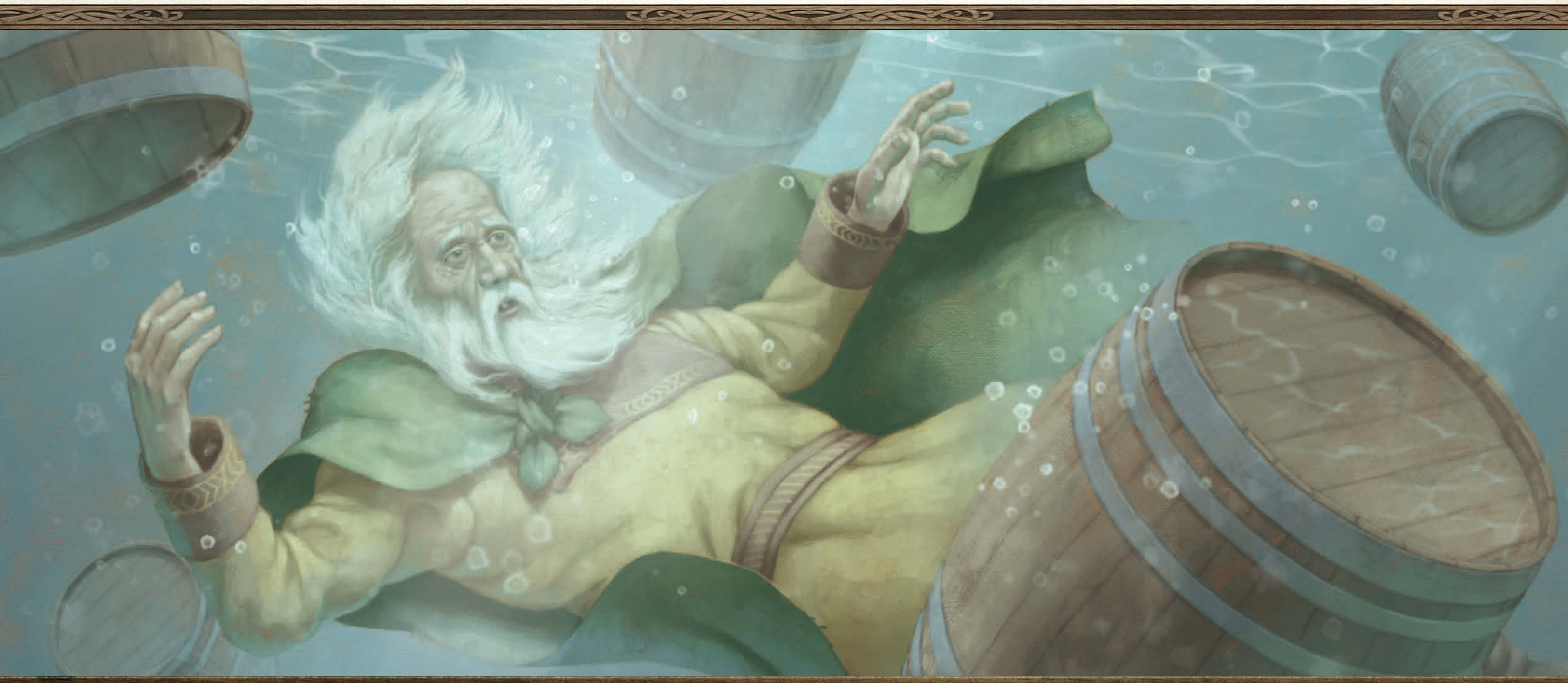
- The Elvenking himself drinks deeply from the Dorwinion reserve, and falls unconscious along with the other victims. But the blood of Thranduil is stronger than that of most of those who live in Middle-earth and it eventually overcomes the poison that burns in its veins. But for the Elvenking the struggle lasts for years instead of days... (see *The Ailing King* below).

The Ailing King

If Thranduil is poisoned, then his son Legolas and a trusted circle of advisors step up to lead the realm while the Elvenking heals. During this period of interregnum, the Wayward Elves gains more and more clout, as the Silvan Elves become ever more reclusive and parochial. An adventure focused on finding a cure for the ailing king might lead the companions to seek help in distant lands, such as the elusive stronghold of Rivendell, or the fabled Golden Wood of Lothlórien. If Thranduil is left to his own devices, then he wakes up three years later, in the year 2970.

9 Halbrech's Fate

Whether the wineseller succeeded in poisoning the ambassadors and the Elvenking or not, Halbrech's fate is sealed. The traitor doesn't wait to be discovered: if the companions seek him out, they find him in the deepest cellar of the halls, standing next to the open trapdoor. The sound of the rushing river echoes through the chamber.



If confronted, Halbrech admits everything this time – for many years, he has been in the service of Dol Guldur. They tricked him into spying for them, long ago, and now he is involved too deeply to have any hope left. He has seen the shadows that dwell in Dol Guldur, he knows their plans. Already, the forest grows darker, and soon all Mirkwood will be theirs. Against this Enemy, there can be no victory. And he hurls himself down the trapdoor to perish in the waters below.

Searching Halbrech's room reveals a false bottom in one chest of clothes; inside are sketches of the Halls, notes on its defences, and estimates of the number of warriors in Thranduil's command. These notes are written in the Common tongue, and are clearly more recent versions of the notes found in Dol Guldur all those years ago.

Year's End

Companions may choose the Search for Answers undertaking this year to investigate the name "Raegenhere". If they do, they may learn it was the name of one of the old kings of the Northmen who lies buried in a barrow under Mirkwood. In fact – it is the very barrow that the Company visited in *The Helm of Peace* (see page 25).

The Plague of Mirkwood

An ill wind blows out of Dol Guldur in the coming years. This evil breath carries a virulent plague, and many among the Woodmen start to sicken and die. In time, the illness spreads throughout the North, as the plague spreads through contact, but also seems to seep down from the mould that grows on the blackened trees. Only the Elves seem immune to the terrible disease. The plague starts with a racking cough, a fever, weakness, and aches in the arms and legs. If the victim is lucky, then this is as far as the plague goes, and the fortunate fellow recovers within a few weeks.

The second stage of the plague comes in the form of strange, yellowish pustules. These growths start around the nose and mouth, but quickly spread to the hands. These pustules weep a clear liquid that carries the infection. This stage of the plague is almost always lethal. If the pustules dry up and become hard, warty growths, then the victim is sure to die.

The third stage of the plague signals the approach of death. The warts spread all over the victim's body, sometimes growing into weird bark-like formations. The patient's limbs convulse, then lock into twisted, agonising positions. The patient's muscles freeze, preventing them from moving, eating or doing anything but drawing shallow, terrified breaths and staring out from the prison of their own flesh. This strange stiffness does not relent with death; in fact, it gets worse. The warts turn brown or grey as the patient dies, so the twisted rigour mortis of the victim resembles nothing so much as a fallen tree limb. It is as though the forest of Mirkwood claims the dead, absorbing them into its gloomy realm.

Treating the Plague

Scholars may use their Healing dice in order to treat victims of the plague. Other heroes (such as those with the *Leechcraft* speciality or suitable non-player characters) can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check in order to grant the target Advantage on a saving throw for each stage (see *Companions & The Plague*, opposite).

Treating the plague requires nearly constant care. A healer can only treat a number of patients equal to their Proficiency Bonus.

Companions & the Plague

Heroes deserve heroic deaths, but life – and death – is not always fair. If the companions expose themselves to the plague (for example, they are trapped inside a building with the plague-ridden for days, or they heroically enter a plagued village to rescue a victim) they run the risk of infection. When this happens, the Loremaster may require a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. If failed, the victim suffers the first stage of the disease... the companion is Poisoned and gains one level of Exhaustion. Once these have been treated (or a week's time has passed), the hero must make another DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the plague progresses no further and the hero is immune to further exposure.

If the second saving throw is failed then the illness has progressed to the second stage. The companion is Stunned and gains 1d3 levels of Exhaustion. After these conditions are treated (or another week passes) then the hero must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. With a failure, the plague progresses to the third stage and the victim perishes. On a success, the illness has begun to retreat... each day the hero must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, he gains a level of Exhaustion. On a success, the fever breaks and the hero is cured and does not need to fear the plague again.

The plague is weaker outside Mirkwood. Beyond the forest eaves, heroes make their saving throws with Advantage.

- YEAR 2968 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 11 OR 12

EVENTS

While travelling in Mirkwood, the companions come across a recently abandoned camp. The ashes of the fire are cold, but the camp was inhabited up to a week ago. Searching around, they find a recently-dug mass grave where at least a dozen bodies lie.

A hideous vampire-bat flits down the Mountains of Mirkwood and makes its hellish nest in the trees near the residence of one of the companions. The monster proceeds to suck the blood from one of the companion's relatives, children or friends. Unless the companions discover the vampire and deal with it, the victim sickens and dies.

This year, rumours speak of eerie lights flickering in the depths of the forest. Some tales claim that the lights hover above buried treasure; others say that the lights are Elvish trickery, and those who follow them will become lost in Mirkwood and wander until they perish.

Word comes from the north of trouble at King Bard's court. Some of the nobles of Dale have grown greedy and proud. As wealth and prosperity continues to make the kingdom stronger, some nobles agitate for Bard to exert his power more. They want Dale to seize the eastern woodlands from the Elves, so there will be firewood for the winter and timber for building, and to reclaim Lake-town and its rich trade for the kingdom.

Beorn decides that the time has come for him to take a wife. His bride might be the daughter of a simple farmer, a princess of the Woodmen or a strange woman from the mountains. Perhaps he marries one of the companions! In any event, heroes from all over Wilderland attend his wedding at the Carrock. Afterwards, it is said that Beorn's joyous laughter was so loud it echoed off the Misty Mountains and could be heard from the Vales of Gundabad to the Falls of Rauros.

ADVENTURING PHASE: NINE IN THE HALL

This adventure takes place in the East Bight, during the winter. There are many reasons why the companions might be in Sunstead during this time of year:

- They might be there to investigate rumours of the plague.

- Ceawin called for their aid in fighting some threat.

- They are inquiring about the disappearance of the village (see the entry for last year).

- Their work with Bofri the Dwarf brings them to the forests of the East Bight.

- They return from a journey to the East or South and shelter in Sunstead for the winter.

The adventure begins when the companions take shelter in a longhouse for the winter. If the Company failed to save Ceawin from the Wood-wight in *The Helm of Peace,* then they stay in Ceawin's own great house in Sunstead. Otherwise, the longhouse is one on the north side of the East Bight, ruled by a warrior named Mordern.

Secrets of the House

The lord of the longhouse hides a secret. If that lord is Ceawin, then the circumstances by which he became a thrall of the Wood-wights are already known to the Loremaster. If the companions are staying under the roof of Mordern, then their host became possessed when he stole from one of the barrows in the shadows of the wood.

Throughout this adventure, the lord of the house is referred to as the Host; replace references to the Host with either Ceawin or Mordern, as appropriate. In either case, the possessing Wood-wight was an ancient king of the Northmen, by the name of Raegenhere. He intends to murder everyone in the hall, one by one.

The Haunted Hall

When the companions first arrive at the longhouse they are looking for shelter from a terrible snowstorm. There are fell voices on the winds that carry the snow, and the bite of the cold is ferocious (each companion must make a **DC 10 Constitution** saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) cold damage on a failure, or half damage on a success). The weather shows no sign of abating; the companions must take shelter or perish. Knocking at the door of the longhouse they are greeted by the Host. If they have not had dealing with the host before, then an introduction might be in order - **Traditions** will be best, but **Persuasion** will do as well - the Host, of course, welcomes them in (the check is **DC 15**... the Host still welcomes them on a failure but other visitors in the hall may be suspicious of them).

There are eight other guests staying in the Hall tonight.

- **Old Geleswinta:** The mother of the Host, this old crone is toothless, blind and more than half mad. She knows that her son is not what he appears to be – that another spirit inhabits his flesh – but she dares not speak openly of the truth to foreigners.

  Geleswinta is off-putting and alarming. Gasp for breath, mutter to yourself, and try to warn the companions of the danger without ever mentioning the Host.

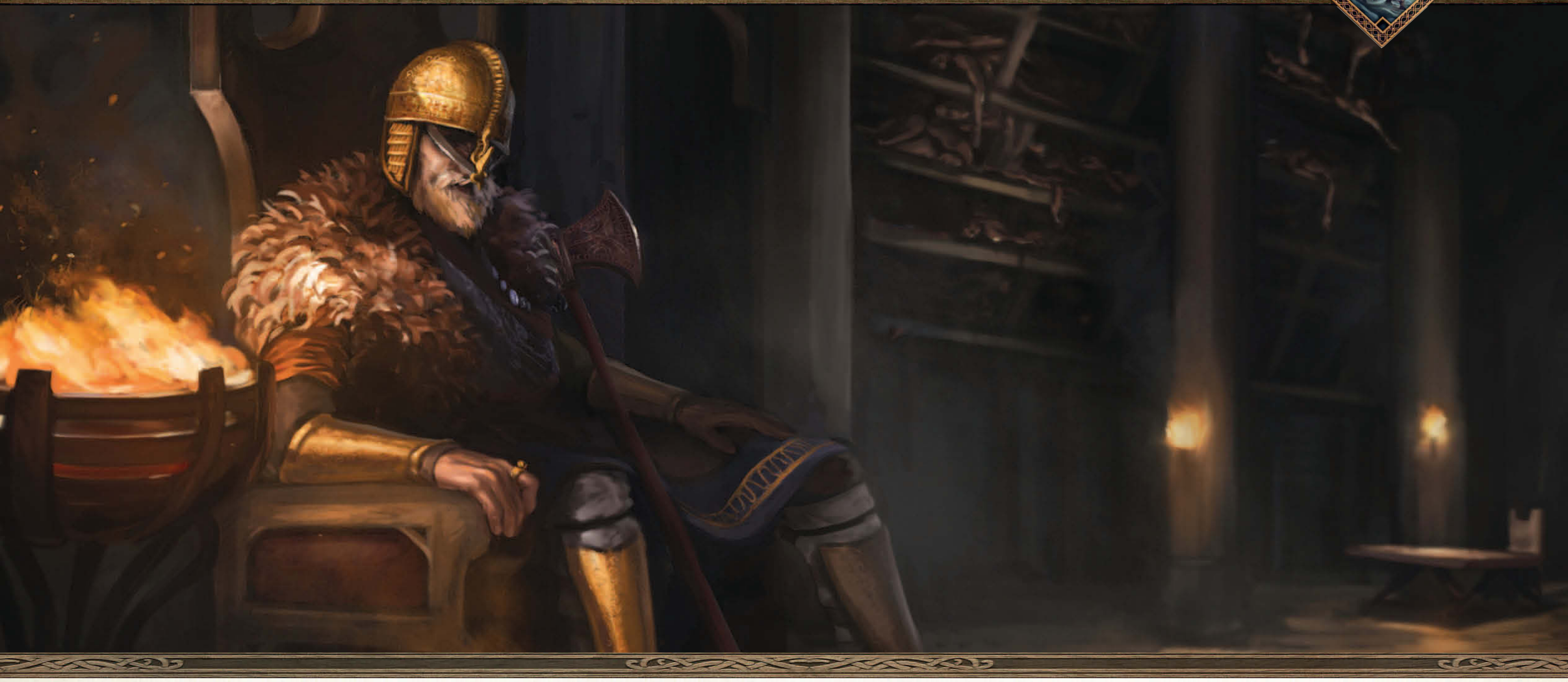
- **Grimfried:** A taciturn forester and warrior, recently returned from the war fought to reclaim the Greydelve. He brought gold and settled in Sunstead, but when his treasure ran out, so too did his welcome, for Grimfried is a violent and unpleasant man. He intends to travel to the Tyrant's Hill once the trail clears.

  Grimfried clearly lusts after Berana, as well as any suitable female companions. He's a lecherous lout who tries to buy women with gold – or takes them by force, if the opportunity arises.

- **Burin the Dwarf Merchant:** A Dwarf from the Lonely Mountain, Burin came to Sunstead to trade and was caught by the storm. He has a fat purse of gold, and suspects that everyone else is trying to rob him. He wants to leave as soon as he can.

  Burin is suspicious and miserly – he's the worst sort of money-obsessed Dwarf. He is not a coward, and will aid the companions if pressed, but any heroism in him is buried very deeply indeed.

- **Ingel, Berana and Radagasa:** Ingel and Berana are a young couple who settled in the East Bight some years ago; their daughter Radagasa is four years old. Ingel is a simple farmer, with a remarkably beautiful wife. The roof of their cottage collapsed under the weight of the snow, so they fled to this hall for shelter.



These three are innocent victims in this affair. They are simple folk, trying to survive on the edge of Mirkwood, unprepared for the darkness to come.

- **Gwina:** Featured in *Rhovanion Region Guide* (page 111), Gwina is a trader from Dorwinion. She has travelled far in her lifetime, but now she grows old and intends to settle down in Lake-town. She came to the East Bight to visit one of her former crewmen who lives here, a man named Signar, but she found no sign of him (he is a previous victim of the Host).

- **The Ill-favoured Man:** His name is Angivisell; sharp-toothed and cruel-eyed, he looks like there is Orcish blood in his ancestry. He arrives after the companions have entered the hall and is a spy for Dol Guldur.

Angivisell is not the villain in this adventure. He suffers from the plague that is about to descend on Mirkwood, and dies from his infection early in the adventure.

The Host and The Hall

The Host is either Ceawin or Mordern. If it is Mordern, then he is a tall, strong man. He is no longer young, but has the corded muscles and deep-set strength of one who has toiled and fought all his life. This hall is his home and his domain, and he speaks with a commanding voice. A huge great axe hangs above the hearth.

The Host's hall is a fine building, one of the strongest in Sunstead. The walls are stone for the most part, with heavy wooden doors. The roof is thatched, and supported by eight huge wooden pillars carved from tree-trunks. The floor is entirely covered with skins and rich rugs to keep away the cold. There are three exits – the front door, the stable door, and a small side door.

The hall consists of one main room, with storerooms and stables at the back. There are cramped sleeping quarters in a loft above the door. While there are small lamps to illuminate the hall, the Host ran out of lamp-oil some weeks ago, so the only light comes from the flickering flames of the fire in the hearth – most of the hall is in darkness.

Hidden beneath the rugs and skins and stuffed into the thatch are the remains of the host's previous victims. More than thirty corpses – or the parts of thirty corpses, at any rate – lie hidden here, frozen stiff and caked with blood.

The timing on the following events is left deliberately loose. The adventure might take place over several days or in a single night.

DINNER IN THE HALL

The Host invites the companions to dine with him and his other guests. Supplies run low, but he still has one last goat to slaughter. He hefts his axe and goes to the back room to kill the animal. Gwina and Berana prepare the meal, while Grimfried gets drunk on mead and shares lustful comments with Burin and anyone else who will listen.

- The Loremaster should use the dinner to briefly introduce the other guests. Everyone is worried about this unnatural winter, but are hopeful that the storm will break soon and that spring will come on its heels.

- Burin is suspicious of the companions, and accuses them of being brigands (unless there is a Dwarf in the Company, in which case he confides in his kinsman).

The Ill-favoured Man Arrives

There is a knock at the door, a frantic hammering. It is the Ill-Favoured Man. If allowed entry to the hall, he speaks of seeing white faces amid the snow, and claims that the hall is surrounded. If the companions investigate (once again needing to make a **Constitution** saving throw, as above), they find that the firewood that was stacked by the side door is gone. There are several strange prints in the snow – the footprints of booted Wood-wights.

- The Ill-Favoured man is sick. He coughs and shivers even after warming himself by the fire, and his spittle is flecked with blood. Any character proficient with **Medicine** notices that he has alarming pustules on his neck and behind his ears, suggesting that his illness is some sort of plague.

- Each companion must make a **DC 10 Constitution** saving throw at this point (see *Companions & the Plague*, page 91). The reason for the roll is left unspecified by the Loremaster, who may hint that the companions may be infected by the plague if they roll badly.

Burin Vanishes

The Dwarf wanders into the darkness of the hall – and does not return. He could have crept out the side door or the stable door without anyone noticing and most people in the hall assume that the unpleasant Dwarf slipped out without saying farewell.

- A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** finds a pouch of coins (worth 10g in total) forgotten in a corner.

The Sick Child

Young Radagasa starts coughing, and soon develops a fever. A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine)** is required to keep her conscious.

- All companions must now make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption (gaining 1 Shadow on a failure) as the night draws in and an unnatural terror seems to fall upon everyone in the house.

No Firewood

The fire runs low and needs fuel. The firewood that was stacked outside the door is gone. Someone needs to go fetch more wood; there is a stand of trees only a short distance away, but someone has to go and chop it.

- Any companions who go out to fetch wood are attacked by Wood-wights. The spectres leer out of the swirling snow and seem to vanish into the wild white landscape (the Loremaster applies the Wights' **Horror of the Wood** ability).

- Once it becomes clear that the hall is under siege by spectres, everyone must pass make another **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or gain 1 Shadow point.

The Ill-favoured Man Dies

Angivisell succumbs to his illness. He doubles over in pain, then coughs and chokes, spitting blood over everyone nearby.

- Anyone who was near Angivisell when he died must make a **DC 10 Constitution** saving throw again to check for infection from the plague.

Grimfried's Lust

Drunk on mead and half-convinced that everyone in the hall is doomed anyway, Grimfried attacks Berana. Berana's husband Ingel tries to stop the warrior, but Grimfried is much stronger and smashes Ingel to the floor. It is up to the Company to stop Grimfried.

- The Host stands by and does not react, while Gwina comforts the sick child.

- Assuming they restrain Grimfried, Ingel demands that they throw the warrior out of the hall as punishment for his crime.

7 Siege of the Wights

The companions hear scratching coming from outside. The Wood-wights are coming! Soon, bony fists hammer on the doors, and the spectres try to claw their way inside.

- The Wood-wights' goal is to sow terror, not to kill the companions – that is an honour reserved for their chieftain, the Host. Therefore, the spectres demand that the companions give them a sacrifice by handing over one of the living in the hall.

- If the companions refuse, the Wood-wights laugh mockingly and say that they will take what they want before the storm breaks. They will take *everyone*.

- If the companions agree, they must choose who to sacrifice. The mad old woman? The dying child? The thuggish warrior? One of their own? Handing over a victim in this fashion is a Misdeed worthy of 3 or more Shadow points.

9 The Herb

Geleswinta volunteers to help with the sick child and hobbles over to examine her. After poking and prodding Radagasa for a few minutes, she mutters about a herb that can help with fever. It is called simbelmynë, and is a white flower that grows on certain mounds and ditches. Place it in boiling water, she says, and let the child breathe the vapours.

- Any companion with the Herb-lore or Leechcraft specialties recognises *simbelmynë* (Evermind in the Common tongue, uilos in Sindarin). It is a white flower that grows on the barrows of the dead. It has no known healing power, but common wisdom attributes it the power to keep the dead safe from the influence of evil spirits.

There are mounds just within the forest edge where Evermind may yet be found amid the snows. Ideally, some of the Company leave the hall in search of the herb, while others stay behind to defend against the lurking Wood-wights.

Those who go in search of the herb are beset by Woodwights, who try to capture them and bury them in the mounds, dressed in burial shrouds and grave goods.

- The Dwarf Burin lies there already, killed by terror.

- If the companions played through *The Helm of Peace*, then they recognise these mounds as the same ones they (or their previous characters!) visited all those years ago. The largest mound is empty. Runes on the wall read "*Raegenhere King sleeps here / until the world's ending. Cursed be he who moves these bones / And cursed be the Wight that wears them.*"

- On another wall is a carving of a great king — presumably Raegenhere — wielding a magnificent axe. It is the same axe carried by the Host.

Blood Dripping

Meanwhile, back in the hall, one of the other survivors throws more wood on the fire. The flames blaze up, bringing a pleasant heat to the icy hall. For a moment, it is almost as though the end of the storm has come and that the nightmare is over. Then blood starts to drip from the ceiling, as the heat from the fire thaws some of the frozen bodies hidden in the thatch.

- Seeing that is certainly a source of Anguish, and is worth another Corruption check (1 Shadow point if the hero fails the saving throw).

7 ESCAPING THE HALL

The Host waits for the companions to weaken, as they face the various threats of the haunted hall. But soon the possessed lord of the hall will make his move and attack; he will swing his great axe with one hand, while he claws at his opponents with the other. Hopefully, by that time the companions will have realised that the hall is not a place of safety, and will not be taken excessively by surprise - their task will become to rescue the remaining victims from the Host's clutches and defeat the spirit.

- When a direct confrontation with the Host is finally reached, there is one Wood-wight per companion, as well as Raegenhere himself (see his stats below). The Wood-wights flee if Raegenhere is defeated.

- Geleswinta's mumblings about the herb have more than a grain of truth in them – if Evermind flowers are thrown in boiling water, then the steam that rises in the hall weakens the bond that ties the spirit of Raegenhere to its host body (Ceawin or Mordern). The spectral form of the Wight flows of out of the victim's body and hangs in the air like some nightmare made real.

- Defeating Raegenhere's physical form results also in the death of the host body. While disembodied, the Wight can be slain only if struck by his own axe. Otherwise, it flees into the night.

Raegenhere

Medium Undead (incarnated Wood-wight)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Armour Class 15 (Scale hauberk)
Hit Points 105 (14d8+42)
Speed 30 ft

Skills Intimidation +5, Perception +4, Traditions +3
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Westron
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Fear of Fire. If a torch or other flame comes within 10 feet of him, Raegenhere suffers Disadvantage on his attack rolls.

Savage Assault. When Raegenhere rolls a natural 18 or 19, he may, as a bonus action, make a single additional melee attack against the same opponent.

Thing of Terror (1/day). Raegenhere is an evil spirit wearing a living man like a suit of armour. He briefly shows his true form and each hero must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or be Frightened of him until the end of his next turn.

Actions

Multiattack. Raegenhere can make two attacks; one with his axe and one with his claws.

Great Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12+3) slashing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Reaction

Fell Spirit (Recharge 5-6). When Raegenhere would be reduced to 0 hit points, he may use his reaction to add 10 (3d6) temporary hit points.

7

Aftermath

If the companions slay Raegenhere, then the unnatural storm breaks and the blizzard subsides. If they managed to defeat the Wight without killing the Host, the grateful lord of the hall rewards them with the treasure from the restless king's barrow (worth 50g in total).

However, if the companions were forced to slay the Host along with the Wight, then they may be accused of murder, especially if they killed Ceawin.

11

Year's End

Nothing of note.

- Year 2969 -

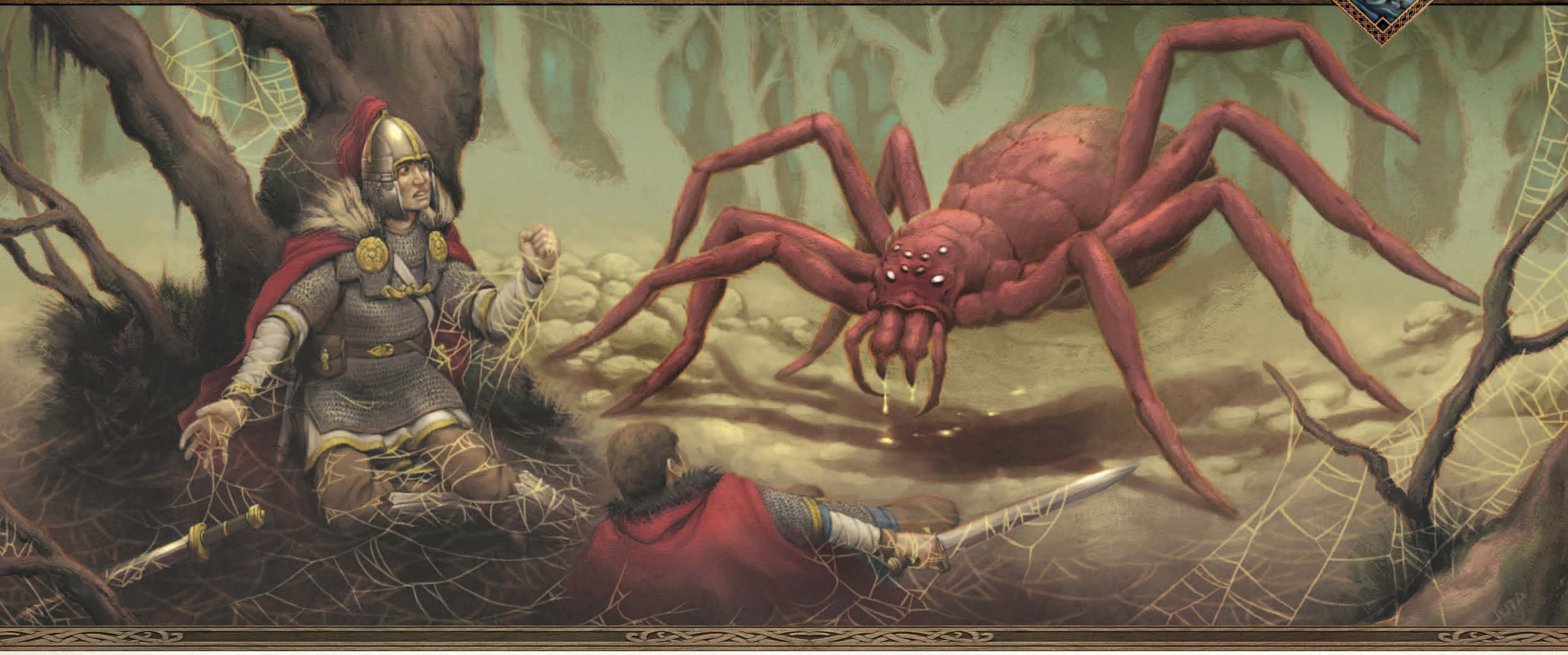
for heroes of level 12 or 13

Events

In this year, Spiders and Great Bats from the Mountains of Mirkwood attack the Woodland Realm. A power (the Ghost of the Forest) moves with them, unseen but not undetected by the Elves. If Thranduil is sick, then the enchantment of the Elf-path is temporarily broken, and evil things flood into the bower. Many Elves argue that they need the light of the Lamp to defend the Woodland Realm.

The plague spawned in the depths of Dol Guldur grows, and victims are reported as far north as the Carrock. So far, the plague takes only the sick, the weak, and the very old, but the Wise and the Elves fear a recurrence of the great plague that hit the region in the year 1640.

Fearing the plague, the Master of Lake-town orders that every foreigner and incoming ship be quarantined. Warehouses and cottages are built on the other side of the bridge that connects the city to the mainland, to house all foreign goods, travellers and merchants for the period of the quarantine. The townsfolk adopt the habit of burning incense and other spices to ward off the evil breath of the plague, raising alarmingly the danger of accidental fires.



Sanjar, the prince of Rhûn who the companions may have helped in 2959 (see *The Horselord's Daughter*) is the target of an assassination attempt. Strange assassins from the East, dusky-skinned Easterlings wielding poisoned blades, attempt to murder Sanjar. Unless the companions are able to stop the assassins, the young man perishes far from home beneath the trees.

A son is born to Beorn. He calls him Grimbeorn.

Adventuring Phase: Wheels within Wheels

While travelling in Western Mirkwood, or along the Old Forest Road, the companions come upon the aftermath of a battle. A dozen warriors lie among the trees, the victims of an ambush by Orcs and Wargs. They slew more than fifty Orcs before they perished. From the black liveries worn by five archers among the dead, they came from Dale.

Searching around reveals prints leading deeper into the woods. When the companions follow these prints, they find two of the Bardings trapped in a Spider-web, with a big nasty Great Spider (page 106 of the *Loremaster's Guide*) about to feast on them. Once they save them, the younger of the two thanks them and introduces himself as no less than Bain son of Bard, Prince of Dale. The other is old Ottarr, his personal counsellor and bodyguard.

The Prince's Tale

The prince is a handsome man of twenty years, with the dark hair and build of his father, and the deep dark eyes of his mother. He relates how he came to be trapped in Mirkwood, so far from home.

Some years ago, a group of nobles in Dale started to clamour for conquest and a show of strength from his father, King Bard. They accused him of having abandoned his loftier aims following the untimely death of his wife. Last year, these nobles found their advocate in Girion, a young man of seventeen claiming to be a direct descendant of the last king of Dale before the Dragon came. This young Girion bore a marked resemblance to his ancestors indeed, and some of the nobles whispered that his claim on the throne was superior to that of King Bard himself.

Following advice from his council, Bard cautiously welcomed Girion at court. The boy claimed openly that his mother lived as an outlaw in the Western Eaves of Mirkwood and that her dying wish was that he seek his fortune in Dale. The townsfolk were overjoyed to have another of the line of Girion in their city, especially as 'young Girion' promised to be a skilled warrior and a brave leader of men.

Last year, at Yuletide, something strange happened: the boy was in the main square of Dale in front of the Royal Palace, when a raven flew down, circled around him three times, and then placed a branch torn from a beech tree upon his sword-arm. Many read an omen in that, indicating that young Girion would lead an army of Dale against the cruel Elves – for, Prince Bain explains, many of the young folk in Dale know nothing of the Woodland Realm, save only wild tales and the recent troubles along the border.

But King Bard was suspicious of this strange raven who bore a branch, and he set spies to watch Girion. One of his counsellors witnessed the young boy talking to that same raven more than once – the bird seemed to be conveying messages between him and someone in Mirkwood.

Bard resolved to send Bain and a group of chosen men to investigate the origins of Girion in the Western Eaves of Mirkwood. They travelled to Lake-town and found it quarantined, so they took a boat down the River Running to the end of the Long Marshes and tried to follow the Old Forest Road to the land of the Woodmen. On the way, they met a pair of Woodmen who offered their services as guides – but they led the Bardings into a trap.

Blood Ties

Girion is the son of Valdis, or of her sister Valya, if Valdis was killed in the adventure *The Helm of Peace*. This makes him a direct descendant of Girion, Lord of Dale, and a possible contender for the throne currently occupied by King Bard, and destined for his son Bain.

The Outlaws

As Bain finishes his tale, the companions hear the noise of several people approaching. They seem to be following Bain's trail, just like the Company did. Those with excellent hearing detect human voices muttering that "he went this way" and "how did the bastard survive?" If the companions react immediately, they may be able to ambush the eight Outlaws (page 75 of the *Loremaster's Guide*); otherwise, the outlaws arrive in the glen and immediately draw swords.

Two of the outlaws are the 'guides' that tricked Bain into an ambush. If the companions played through *Honour Among Thieves*, they recognise some of the outlaws as men who were in the outlaw band seven years ago.

The outlaws try to awkwardly bluff the Company ("Prince Bain! Thank fortune we found you alive! We assumed the Orcs had... oh, sod it!") before attacking ("Kill them all, lads!"). Prince Bain is weakened and tired, and should not be endangered in the fight (he is the future king of Dale!), but Ottarr may help as his sword is sharp and his hand is fell (Ottarr is a Warrior, see page 72 of the Loremaster's Guide).

Once the battle is won, the companions may interrogate the surviving outlaws. If the companions try to kill them all, then Bain asks – or commands any Barding hero – to spare one.

- The outlaws are part of a band led by Elfsigil (see *Honour Among Thieves*). If the companions ensured peace between the outlaws and the folk of Woodland Hall, then the outlaw band is a small one that splintered off from the main group. If the Company failed to accomplish Geirbald's last wish, then the cruel Elfsigil became the leader of the outlaws.

- Their leader Elfsigil ordered them to find Prince Bain and bring him to their camp north of the Old Forest Road. He knew Prince Bain was coming because of Elfsigil's magic. Elfsigil can "talk to the birds" and is visited by "black wizards". From the description, the Company can at least tell that the bird is Eágbitar, the raven associated with Valdis.

- The Orcs seemed to be lying in wait. The outlaws fled as soon as the first Orcs attacked. They were not the usual Orcs of Mirkwood; they were "big, dark bastards" in heavy armour and wielding ugly curved blades.

- If asked about Valdis, the outlaw shrugs. They remember Valdis well. Elfsigil did everything she told him to do, and everyone knew that she was really running the outlaws. She vanished about a year ago, taking with her half their treasure and some of their best fighters. Elfsigil did not seem to care too much, and most of the outlaws assumed that he got tired of the old harridan and moved on to a younger wench.

Prince Bain asks the companions to help him find and possibly capture Elfsigil. He will reward them well once he returns to Dale.

12

The Lair of the Outlaws

If the companions cleared the Old Forest Road over the course of the campaign, then the Outlaws' lair is a poorly-defended camp on the edge of Western Mirkwood. However, if they have not cleared the road, then the Outlaws have occupied and fortified the Beacon Tower in the Haunted Hills (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 98), making attacking them a much more difficult prospect. The description below assumes the outlaws have residence in the Beacon Tower, but if they have just a small camp, then the companions can easily sneak in.

There are twice as many Outlaws as companions if the Company completed Geirbald's last request in 2962, or four times as many if Elfsigil rules the entire band. How will the Company deal with the outlaws? Here are some suggestions:

- **Sneaking In:** The Company can try sneaking past the outlaws with **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth)** checks. Elfsigil's quarters are high atop the Beacon Tower, which can be reached only by a narrow spiral staircase that is easy to defend.
- **The Secret Passage:** If the companions have a Dwarf in their number, they can find the entrance to the Spider-haunted tin mines and stone quarries nearby, and from there find a concealed entrance into the cellars of the tower.
- **Besieging the Tower:** The Beacon Tower is far from the domains of Men, but within the reach of the Beornings or the Woodmen of Woodland Hall. If the Company call in allies, they can besiege the tower and take it by force of arms.
- **Calling Elfsigil Out:** Elfsigil rules the outlaws by force of personality. Should a champion challenge him in front of the outlaws (with a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation)** check), Elfsigil will have to come and speak with them or else risk looking weak.

The Messenger

Elfsigil is not alone in the camp – the Messenger of Mordor is there when the Company arrives. The Nazgûl leaves as soon as the Company's presence is detected. The characters may only catch a glimpse of a hooded horsemen on a black steed, or be scattered by a wave of unreasoning fear when the Ringwraith rides out, but there can be little doubt that Elfsigil is in league with Dol Guldur.

9

Elfsigil's Story

The outlaw chieftain scornfully dismisses the Company when he meets them. Valdis, he claims, is gone and good riddance to her. He does not know where she is, nor does he care. A **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check confirms that he is lying – he is still serving Valdis, and still in love with the older woman. If challenged, he fights to the death (Elfisigil is an Outlaw Chief and will call several Outlaws to aid him if possible).

Searching Elfsigil's chamber (a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** check) reveals several letters, carried south by Eágbitar. They reveal that Valdis went north to the Mountains of Mirkwood to seek some 'treasure' that would be of great benefit to her son's ambitions. She communicates with her son and Elfsigil using her raven, Eágbitar. Valdis is somewhere in the Mountains. She commanded Elfsigil to gather more outlaws and move to the Long Marshes, where she will give him further commands.

News from Dale

While the Company and Bain are in Mirkwood, word comes from Dale (by way of the raven of a companion, for example): the plague has come to the north. While there have been only a few victims so far, it is widely reported that King Bard has fallen terribly ill. The King is alive, but he is too weak to leave his sickbed.

Furthermore, everyone believes that Prince Bain perished in the forest along with his guards (one of Valdis' agents brought news of the Orc attack back soon after it happened). With the King sick and his heir dead or missing, the hearts of the people of Dale turn to another hero of the line of kings of old – young Girion is not yet acclaimed as heir-designate, but many in Dale look to him to lead them in these dark times.

Prince Bain receives the news with grief and would return to Dale immediately, but wise Ottarr counsels him not to act rashly: with his father sick, only Prince Bain prevents the nobles who oppose King Bard from putting young Girion on the throne - a nuisance that can be easily remedied by men without scruples. Ottarr fears for the life of his prince, and counsels him to look for allies here in Mirkwood to support him when he returns.

The Dark Schemes of Valdis

Part of Valdis' scheme is obvious. She gained allies in Dale in a group of wealthy nobles who want more power, and they support her son Girion as he has a good claim to the throne. She also intends to move the outlaws to the eastern side of Mirkwood so they can 'threaten' the traders and merchants, and then her son can 'defeat' them, winning glory without peril.

But there is an even darker side to Valdis' plans. For Girion to become king without civil war, she needs to kill King Bard. The Messenger of Mordor sent her to find a dark treasure in the Mountains of Mirkwood. There, amid the ruins and the twisted trees, she found what she sought – the Hame of the Great Vampire.

Following the advice of the Ringwraith, Valdis wore the enchanted skin and discovered she could turn into a vampire-bat. The old schemer then used the Hame to fly into the heart of Dale and start sucking blood from King Bard in his sleep. His plague is nothing of the sort; it is Valdis who is draining his body and spirit night after night.

The Company may thwart Valdis' schemes in the adventure *The Hame of the Vampire* (page 107).

Year's End

The Company may help Prince Bain find a provisional home in the Vales of Anduin or in the Western Eaves of Mirkwood. Ottarr counsels Prince Bain to adopt a different name and identity for the time being, as the dispute between Bain and Girion promises to be difficult to solve.

- YEAR 2970 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 12 OR 13

Events

If King Thranduil fell victim of the poison of the traitor Halbrech the Wineseller (see page 87) he finally wakes up in the spring of this year. The Elvenking appears as if he is fully recovered in mind and body, but the dark dreams he experienced while locked in his unnatural sleep have tainted his spirit; Thranduil becomes sympathetic with the views of the Wayward Elves, and his first command is to expel all foreigners residing in the Woodland Realm (Thranduil's Halls cannot be considered a Sanctuary by the companions any more).

The children stolen by the Wayward Elves (see *Year 2958*, page 53) return, greatly changed by the experience (and twelve years older). The children appear wise and skilled beyond their years, and there is something bright and strange in their eyes. These 'changelings', as they come to be known, return to their old homes, but are now committed allies of the Elves. Some do not welcome their return, and fear the children as they fear the wilder folk of the woods (see also *New Background: Changeling*, below).

The horrors of the plague are seen elsewhere in Mirkwood. Many flee human contact, risking the perils of the wood rather than fall victim to the disease. Strangely, the plague spares Woodmen-town. Rumours quickly spread that the light of the Lamp of Balthi protects against the plague. Many travel from Woodman Hall, Rhosgobel and other places in Mirkwood to find sanctuary close to the healing light of the Lamp.

Woodmen fleeing their homes make themselves vulnerable to the Werewolf of Mirkwood. This horror stalks the Western Eaves this year, and more victims than ever fall prey to its teeth and claws.

Prince Bain of Dale has not returned from his journey into Mirkwood and the realm is ruled by a council of regents, as King Bard is sick. Rumours say that Bain was slain by outlaws in Mirkwood, while others claim that the prince escaped and is now living in the woods.

The plague strikes the very heart of the Beornings when Beorn's infant son shows signs of illness. Beorn sends the child to Radagast for healing.

New Background: Changeling

Weariness fell from him soon in that house, and he had many a merry jest and dance, early and late, with the elves...

You wandered into the enchanted land of the Elves as a young child, and grew up under their care and tutelage. They delighted in your mortal innocence and wonder, and taught you the ways of the Elves. Now, you have returned to the mortal realm, but you remember with fondness the teachings of your foster-parents. You are a child of the twilight, halfway between the starry night of the Elves and the harsh day of the Edain.

Skill Proficiency: Stealth or Lore

Feature: Child of the Woodland Realm

Your were raised by the First-born and will likely never be close to your own kin. If you select a *Cultural Heirloom* as an Open Virtue, you may only select from the Elves of Mirkwood list on page 159 of the *Adventures in Middle-earth Player's Guide*. You cannot use the Barding heirlooms. When selecting Cultural Virtues you use the Barding list on page 101 of the *Player's Guide*.

Suggested Characteristics

Born of Barding-stock, but raised by Elves on the bounties of the forest, Changelings tend to be lithe-limbed, but with sometimes hidden reserves of strength and endurance. Some took wise words from their Elven foster-parents to heart, others mimic the gracefulness of the First-born without thought. Changelings are often adrift in the wider world, but also adapt quickly to new situations and are often the first to gain insights into strange matters.

D8	Distinctive Quality
1	**Cautious**. Living with Elves has taught you that all is not as it seems, sometimes.
2	**Cunning**. The First-born have quick tongues and you learned to keep up with their japes.
3	**Fair-spoken**. It is said that there is no one more versed in diplomacy than an Elf-lord and you attended them closely.
4	**Lordly**. Growing up in the court of the Elvenking has given you perspective on the lives of Men and a demeanour to fit.
5	**Merciful**. The Elves speak often of understanding others and not rushing to judgement.
6	**Patient**. The last decade or more of your life has taught new ways at looking at time and the turning of days and years.
7	**Proud**. You have been gifted an education few mortals have ever received; you have much to teach others.
8	**Wary**. The wider world is stranger than the Woodland Realm, the only home you remember.

D6	Speciality
1	**Beast-lore.** You remember endless summer days riding along with the Elves on the Great Hunt.
2	**Burglary.** Many of the First-born amuse themselves with harmless pranks, and you quickly learned how to help pull of some of their most daring escapades.
3	**Elven-lore.** The many songs and stories that you heard in your youth has made wise in the tales of ancient days that no other mortals remember.
4	**Herb-lore.** The Elves taught you the ways of the forest, and how to find unexpected aid among the plants that call it home.
5	**Minstrelsy.** A song is ever on the lips of the First-born, and you often joined in their merriment at the world.
6	**Woodwright.** The forest is a friend, but it is also a servant; you've spent long hours fashioning useful things from the gifts of the trees.

D6	Hope and Despair
1	**Hope:** I have seen great beauty in the Woodland Realm. **Despair:** All fine things are products of the past, and our efforts today are doomed to failure.
2	**Hope:** My friends among the Elves would never forsake me. **Despair:** I am as a pet to them, treasured but soon to die and be replaced.
3	**Hope:** The world has much to offer a child of two worlds. **Despair:** I am abandoned by both birth and foster parents, and alone.
4	**Hope:** The Elves laugh at the Shadow and I laugh with them. **Despair:** Mockery and merriment are useless in the face of the Enemy.
5	**Hope:** I will share what I have learnt with others. **Despair:** There is no hope in the world of Men; they are deaf fools.
6	**Hope:** The Elves told me a secret and I will treasure my knowledge. **Despair:** The world is unkind, cold and cruel; I wish I was back among the Elves!

The Forest Dragon

Huge Dragon (Full-grown Long-worm)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Armour Class 19 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points 207 (18d12+90)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Resistances non-magical bludgeoning and slashing
Saving Throws Strength +11, Dexterity +10, Constitution +9
Skills Athletics +11, Stealth +10, Survival +10
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Unknown (no one in this Age of the world has heard her speak)
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Deadly Tail-grip. The Forest Dragon has one Legendary action each turn, which she can use to cause 13 (1d12+7) bludgeoning damage to a Grappled foe.

Mirkwood Dweller (Recharge 5-6). If the Forest Dragon is within 5 feet of a Mirkwood scenery feature, she may use her bonus action to gain half-cover from it, even if the feature would not normally provide it.

Thing of Terror (1/day). The Forest Dragon can use her bonus action to rear up and display her full strength. Each hero within 60 feet must make a **DC 19 Wisdom** saving throw or be Frightened of her until the end of her next turn.

Tough Hide. The Forest Dragon is resistant to non-magical bludgeoning and slashing damage.

Weak Spot. If the Forest Dragon uses a special ability that uses an action (**Crushing Tail-grip** or **Multiattack**), any heroes that are within range may use their reaction to make a single attack. For this attack only, she is considered vulnerable to all piercing, slashing and bludgeoning damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The Forest Dragon makes two Bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8+7) piercing damage.

Crushing Tail-grip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (1d12+7) bludgeoning damage. The target becomes Grappled (escape **DC 21**). The dragon can spend its action to cause 13 (1d12+7) bludgeoning damage to the Grappled foe.

Adventuring Phase: Slaying the Forest Dragon

The Forest Dragon (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 79) awoke from her slumber ten years ago. The gloomy barrens of Northern Mirkwood offer little in the way of sustenance, so she turns her heavy-lidded gaze west to the fertile vales of Anduin and the lands of the Beornings.

In the middle of spring she reaches the eaves of Mirkwood, and falls upon the defenders of the Forest Gate with savage fury. Three gulps of her monstrous jaws, and the Elves who watch the gate are gone. From there, she slithers west again, and devours a herd of cattle before crawling back into the woods.

Both Beorn and the Elvenking call for heroes to seek out and slay the Dragon.

Hunting the Forest Dragon

The Forest Dragon is canny and wood-wise. For a creature so big, she is surprisingly stealthy, and her green-black hide hides her in the darkness of the forest. It is relatively simple to find her trail, but as soon as the Dragon realises she is being followed, she likes to turn around and lay a trap for her pursuers. She might slither up into the treetops and drop down on them from above, sink her long body into a river and watch them like a crocodile or just lurk in the shadows and ambush them. The best way to catch her is to lure her out with food, for the Forest Dragon is half-starved. She would devour all the lands of the Beornings if she dared – but she is not ready yet to challenge Beorn. If the companions lay a trap with a few fat cows, then sooner or later the Dragon will come to them.

Fighting the Forest Dragon

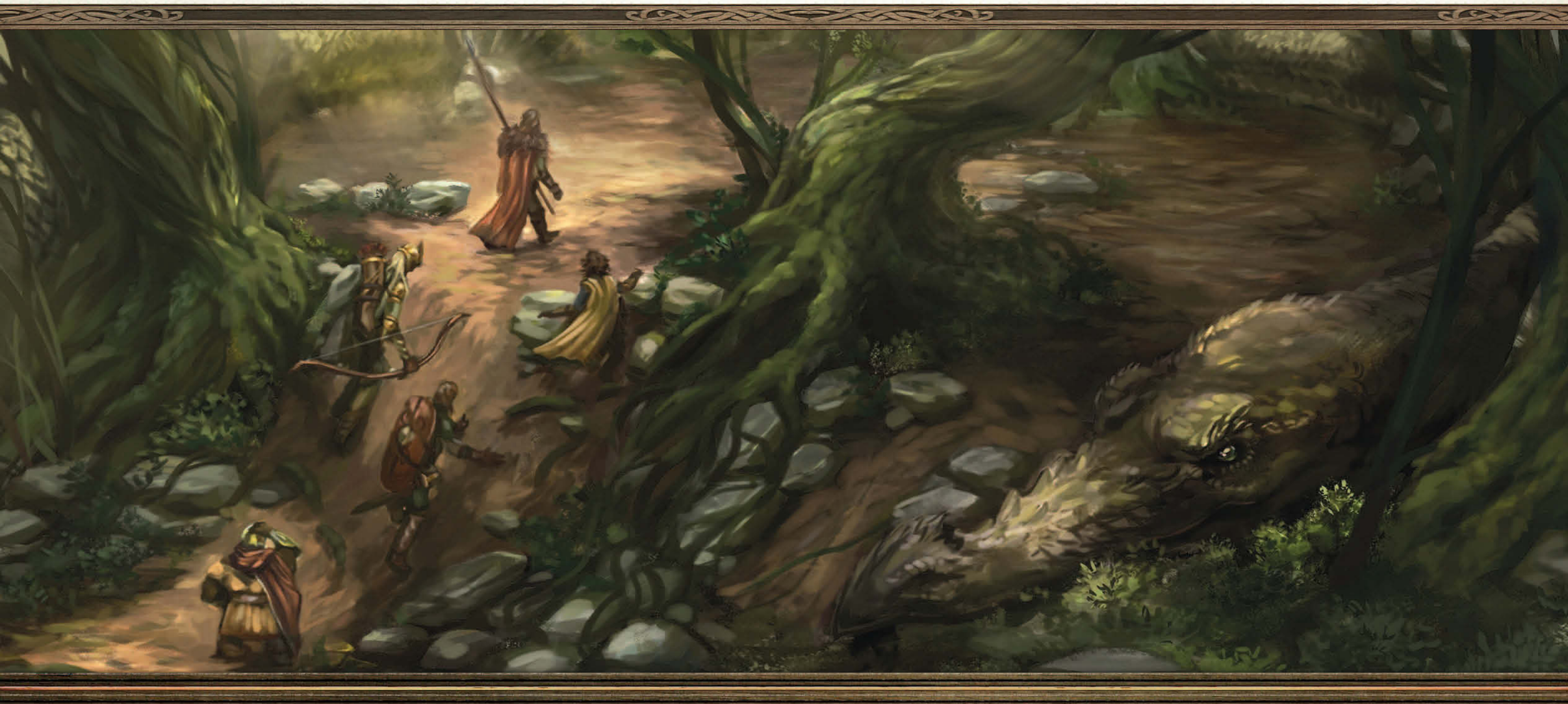
The Forest Dragon is a Long-worm, a wingless dragon of the line of Scatha, lesser in stature than Smaug the Golden, but still a terrible threat to the Free Peoples. In combat, the Forest Dragon targets her strongest foes with her **Deadly Tail-grip**, then crushes them to death whilst she bites at any would-be rescuers. She avoids fighting outside of the forest, to exploit her **Mirkwood Dweller** ability to her best advantage.

The Hoard

The death of a Dragon never fails to attracts thieves and treasure-hunters, as the fell beast must have had a hoard hidden somewhere! The curse of Dragon-gold is strong indeed in such dark times...

If the exiled Dwarves of Northern Mirkwood are still around (in other words, if the Greydelve was never reclaimed), then they covet the hoard and try to steal it.

No one seems to have a clue to where the treasure might lie undisturbed. The Viglundings used to live around the area;



survivors of that folk may still be living in the forest and know where the Forest Dragon made her lair. If the companions are able to locate where the Forest Dragon slept (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 72), then they may find her treasure hoard – it is not as fabulous as the wonderful treasure of Smaug, but it is worth a king's ransom in these fallen days. The hoard is worth at least 500g, and has at least a few notable objects:

- *The Torc of Fram:* A treasure of the ancestors of Rohan, this torc of gold with garnets was looted from the ruins of a town in the Vales of Gundabad where that folk dwelt for a time. The torc gives anyone who wears it the *Lordly* Distinctive Quality.
- *The Cup of Kinship:* Another treasure from the Vales of Anduin, it is said that those who drink from this golden cup are forever bound together in true friendship. If everyone in the Company drinks from the cup, then the first time in an Adventuring phase that any hero gains Inspiration, everyone in the Company gains Inspiration. This bond can be renewed once every year.

Year's End

The passing of a Dragon brings always good fortune – the DC for all Holding Upkeep checks this year is reduced by 2.

- Year 2971 -

for heroes of level 12 or 13

Events

The plague continues to spread throughout Mirkwood. Villagers abandon Black Tarn Hall, which suffered greatly from the wasting sickness, and make for the healing light of the Lamp of Balthi. Others leave Mirkwood altogether, and seek shelter at Mountain Hall or with the Beornings. More evil creatures come down from the Mountains of Mirkwood to trouble the Elves. Spiders, Vampires, Wargs and Orcs trespass within thirty miles of the Halls of Thranduil.

To defend his Realm, the Elvenking causes the Enchanted Stream to follow a new course. The stream now doesn't cross the Elf-path any more, but flows north-west to the south following the track, until it plunges over a new waterfall near the gates of Thranduil's Halls.

Prince Bain sends messengers to Dale from his exile to reveal that he is alive and well, and meaning to return soon. Some time later he takes the road, but must abandon his plans when assassins try to kill him. He is saved by faithful Ottarr, who is grievously wounded but survives.

In the meantime in Dale, young Girion accuses Prince Bain of having betrayed and deserted his own folk. More and more nobles flock to support his cause. King Bard remains bedridden and afflicted with the 'plague'.

Adventuring Phase: The Dying of the Light

Radagast summons the Company to Rhosgobel. Refugees from all over the Western Eaves of Mirkwood crowd into the small sheltered enclave within the hedge, and the Wizard does his best to care for them. His face is careworn, his eyes haunted by the sight of so much suffering. He shows the Company to another, equally horrific sight. In a mass grave outside Rhosgobel are many recent victims of the Werewolf of Mirkwood.

These were folk who fled Black Tarn Hall and came to Rhosgobel seeking healing, but the Werewolf caught them before they could find sanctuary. The beast's attacks must be stopped.

The Nature of the Beast

Ever since the year 2965 (see *The Theft of the Lamp* on page 78) Radagast has wondered about the connection between the Werewolf of Mirkwood and the Lamp of Balthi. The Lamp is the one power in Mirkwood that the Werewolf cannot endure, but it is not strong enough to destroy it.

By now, Radagast (and possibly the companions) have realised that the Werewolf of Mirkwood cannot be defeated normally, as the evil spirit that inhabits its physical body can abandon it to escape destruction, only to later possess another Warg or wolf and turn it into another monstrous

Werewolf. These days, the Werewolf rules a huge pack of Wargs and is never seen alone.

Radagast believes that the only way to permanently defeat the Werewolf is to prevent the spirit from fleeing the uncovered light of the Lamp (the companions may have come to the same conclusions by themselves).

To do this, the Company must:

- Fight the Werewolf of Mirkwood and slay it, making sure that there are no wolves or Wargs nearby for the spirit to flee into;
- Shine the Lamp of Balthi onto the disembodied spirit, and hold it there until it is burnt away to nothing but a fleeting shade of its former strength.

To put this plan into action the heroes must retrieve the Lamp, lure the Werewolf, deal with its pack of Wargs and slay the beast for the last time.

Travel to Woodmen-town 12

In better days, the Company could cross to the Dusky River and take a boat, or make their way along the relatively safe woods of the Western Eaves. Now, any travel risks attack from the Werewolf or Spiders. Due to the proximity of the Werewolf and other evil creatures the Peril Rating is 5 and the trip generates 1d2+2 Journey Events.

Get the Lamp 9

The Lamp of Balthi is a cherished relic of the folk of Woodmen-town, and they believe it is their only shelter from the threat of the plague. Persuading them to give it up, even only for a short time and even with Radagast's blessing, will not be easy. The Company may have to swear that they will protect the Lamp, or even steal the Lamp out of the hall in order to use it against the Werewolf. This will either require an Audience with the Company at Disadvantage, or clever use of **Stealth, Sleight of Hand, Deception** or other skills.

Lure the Werewolf 12

The Werewolf hates the Lamp of Balthi more than anything else in Arda – but it is no fool, and will not charge into Woodmen-town blindly. The Company need to find a way to lure the Werewolf into a trap. Some possibilities:

- Bring the Lamp to the Werewolf's lair in the Mountains of Mirkwood.
- Take the Lamp out of Woodmen-town and use it as bait.
- Go and track the Werewolf down in the deep forest.

Deal with the Pack 9

The Werewolf of Mirkwood runs at the head of a pack of more than a hundred wolves. The Company must find a way to drive these beasts away, lure them away from the Werewolf or else kill them all first before engaging the beast itself. Ideally, the Company can call for help a patron or ally.

- Beorn or Radagast can speak to the animals, and could whistle up a herd of deer to lure the wolves away;
- Saruman the White, should the Company call on him, is a Wizard of great power and authority. He alone has the strength to stop the Werewolf from fleeing into the body of another wolf. If the Company can slay the Werewolf once in his presence, he can hold the spirit while they bring the Lamp to bear;
- If a companion has been entrusted with a *Hound of the West*, then the faithful beast speaks up and volunteers to drive away the wolves. If entrusted with the task, the Hound succeeds admirably – all the Wargs and wolves chase the Hound howling into the depths of Mirkwood – but the marvellous dog never returns.

The Death of the Beast

To defeat the Werewolf of Mirkwood once and for all the Company must first slay its body – this requires reducing the wolf to 0 hit points (bearing in mind its ability to regain hit points once in a round if it would be reduced to 0) and it must fail its Death saving throws (if allowed). Then no other wolves must be around, and the Lamp of Balthi must be uncovered and its light made to shine on the Werewolf. If these conditions are acquired, then the spirit residing inside the dying wolf-body will attempt to leave it, but will be burned by the ancient radiance of the Lamp, never to be seen or heard of in this Age of the world again.

The Lamp also provides some benefits in battle:

- The uncovered Lamp allows all heroes to gain Inspiration. Furthermore, while the Lamp is lit, the companions have Advantage and their foes have Disadvantage on attack rolls. This effect ends if the Lamp is extinguished for any reason.

Unexpected Complications

This is to be the final confrontation with the Werewolf of Mirkwood, and the Company's last chance to slay the beast forever. The Loremaster must let the heroes drive the battle, adapting the scene to reflect their preparations and their planned trap. However, things should never go as expected, and the Loremaster may include one or more complications and twists to the battle...

- **Treachery of the Woodmen:** If Ceawin is still in the thrall of a Wight, or if Mogdred is still alive, then they may interfere with the final battle. Alternatively, well-meaning but foolish Woodmen may try to take the Lamp back from the 'thieves'. Choose this complication for groups who have a long association with the Woodmen and their internal politics.

- **The Nazgûl Strike:** The Werewolf is a valuable weapon to the Enemy, and neither the Ghost of the Forest nor the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur will let it be destroyed so easily. This option works best for players who enjoy nigh-impossible odds!

- **The Werewolf's Hostage:** Before the trap is sprung, the Werewolf captures someone dear to one of the companions. In a snarling, bestial tongue, it offers to exchange its hostage for the Lamp. Refuse, and the hostage dies. Choose this option for characters who have made their home in Mirkwood.

- **The Beast Within:** Burned and scarred by the Light of the Lamp, and denied the body of a wolf to inhabit, the spirit leaps into the only shelter it can find – the body of a companion! The character must immediately make a **Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption, at a **DC** of 12 + the character's Shadow rating.

  If the saving throw fails, then the body of the companion is seized by the Werewolf of Mirkwood and the only thing to free the world from this bane is to kill both hero and monster! If the saving throw succeeds, the character is able to imprison the Werewolf within his own flesh. The character is now a skinchanger and can turn into a wolf! (See *The Curse of the Werewolf* below. Moreover, this is an excellent lead-in to the adventure *Beorn's Quest* - see page 115).

The Curse of the Werewolf

A companion inhabited by the Werewolf of Mirkwood immediately gains 5 Shadow points, as his spirit is tainted by the unquenchable hunger of the evil thing.

The curse allows the hero to turn into a wolf of prodigious size at will (use the stats on page 113 of the *Loremaster's Guide* while the hero is in wolf-form, but the hero retains his hit points and known languages). Each time the companion completes a Fellowship phase, he must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw against Corruption or gain 1 Shadow point.

The corrupting nature of the Werewolf's spirit means that the hero's attempts to Heal Corruption are always made with Disadvantage. Furthermore, if the hero suffers a Bout of Madness while in wolf-form then the Werewolf comes to fore again, killing indiscriminately until the mood passes or the Werewolf is made Unconscious.

- **Pity Stays Your Hand:** The dying beast pleads for the Company to shroud the Lamp. It is dying, but the Lamp will burn its spirit and make it suffer as it passes. If they shroud the Lamp, it can die easily. The companions may suspect that the Werewolf is lying, but this is exactly what it seems – an opportunity to show pity. The spirit was not always evil, but the Dark Powers corrupted it into something monstrous. However, vengeful companions may wish to see the beast pay for all its crimes.

Year's End

If the Company failed to destroy the Werewolf, then it continues to prey on the unfortunate Woodmen. Travel between the various settlements becomes virtually impossible. The Woodmen Houses must each stand alone against the darkness. If they succeed, the Woodmen are initially suspicious of tales that speak of the defeat of the Werewolf of Mirkwood – other hunters have claimed the beast was dead, only to be proved wrong. However, as the nights roll by and there is no sign of the wolf reborn, the folk of Woodmen-town realise that the beast is finally gone. The shadow of the plague still hangs over them, but that day the companions are hailed as heroes.

Companions who took part in the slaying of the Werewolf of Mirkwood and who do not belong to the Woodmen may choose to Receive Title (Hero of the Woodmen) undertaking this year (see page 86).

- YEAR 2972 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 13 OR 14

Events

The death of the Werewolf of Mirkwood is marked by feasts and celebration from Northern Mirkwood to the Black Tarn.

King Bard continues to grow weaker, and many in Dale openly discuss the succession of Girion to the throne.

Adventuring Phase: The Hame of the Vampire

Several years ago, the outlaw Valdis went into the Mountains of Mirkwood in search of a relic that could further her son's ambitions. Guided by the whispered malice of the Ringwraiths of Dol Guldur, she found an entrance into the labyrinth of tunnels and caves beneath the dark hills. And there, in some lightless chasm, she found what she sought.

There are several ways for the companions to become involved in this quest:

- If they played the adventure *Wheels Within Wheels* (page 97), then they know from Elfsigil that his mistress is somewhere in the Mountains of Mirkwood. Finding someone in the wilderness is no easy matter, but after several weeks of cold trails and false starts, they spot Eágbitar and follow the bird into the caves.

- Alternatively, they might be contacted by Thranduil. The Elvenking believes that the recent spate of Vampire attacks in the Woodland Realm are planned and directed by a single dread will. He sends the Company into the mountains, telling them to retrace the path he himself walked many years ago.

- Finally, a companion in Dale might see the monster that is haunting King Bard, and track the Vampire to the Mountains of Mirkwood.

The Shadow of the Mountain

The journey into the Mountains of Mirkwood takes the Company through some of the most dangerous terrain in the whole forest. The land is cracked and tortured, resulting in many hidden chasms and ravines. The trees cluster dark and thick together, so a traveller might not see a cliff-edge or some other hazard until he falls over it. The Mountains of Mirkwood are a Blighted land, so the Loremaster should call for saving throws against Corruption as the companions make their way through the wilderness.

In time, the companions come to the Elven ruins of the Refuge. White marble pillars jut like dry bones out from the black earth, and collapsed buildings stare with hollow-eyed windows at the intruders. The Refuge was despoiled long ago, and there may be Orcs lurking in wait here.

This is where Thranduil's path began when he quested to destroy the Great Vampire (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 97).

9

The Path of Song

Any companion proficient with Performance or possessing *Elven-lore* knows the *'Lay of Thranduil & the Vampire'*, although mortals have long since forgotten the King's name and now refer to it as *'The Ballad of the Green Prince and the Red Queen'*. The middle section of the song describes how to find the entrance used by Thranduil.

All crowned with mist the twisted peak
Stood proud of its brethren, grey and bleak.
Forth the hunters, brave and bold
Nine there were, yet 'twas foretold.
That one alone would climb back down
They did not shirk the oath they'd sworn.
But climbed the hills through fir and thorn
the sun their herald that first morn.
Three days they walked, and fought and bled
horrors uncounted behind them tread.
Until at last they found the Gate
Morgoth's maw, that pit of hate.
Noisome vapours rose from the gulf
at last the prince said "hold, enough!
Our foe is near, we've found her lair."
And from the deeps, the foetid air
Became a deathly pall, a hame of night
And darkness took him from our sight.

If the companions follow the words of the song, they know how to find the chasm. Travel three days east from the Refuge, look for a twisted peak with bare sides that is reached through a forest of fir and thorn, and then find a black chasm. The journey is unpleasant and perilous, but at least it is swift.

If the Company does not follow the song, then they must use **Investigation** or **Survival** to find traces of the Vampire. These checks are at **DC 20** and every other failure causes the heroes to gain a level of Exhaustion as they scramble up and down the steep sides of the mountains looking for signs of the Vampire's passage.

9

Into the Chasm

The trail ends at the lip of a deep chasm, a gaping cleft in the flank of the mountain. There is no easy path down. The only way to enter the chasm is to climb down. The walls of the chasm are thronged with thousands of bats. If the companions climb down slowly and carefully, taking every necessary precaution, the task won't require them to make any roll. The companions face three very different threats instead:

- **Flocks of Vampire Bats:** A huge swarm of Great Bats (see page 114 of the *Loremaster's Guide*) flap out of the darkness and attack the companions. There are four bats per companion. Climbing companions have Disadvantage on their attacks and the bats have Advantage on attack rolls against climbers.

- **Noisome Vapours:** A cloud of sulphurous smoke rises from some hellish fire far below. This strange smoke makes the companions feel light-headed and uncertain, and causes them to make a **DC 20 Wisdom** saving throw. Those who fail gain 3 Shadow points. Any companion made Miserable by the smoke may fall under the influence of the Great Vampire (see page 110).

- **Outlaws:** Several Outlaws accompanied Valdis into the Mountains, but only five of them survive to this day. They attack the Company as they make the final stage of their descent into the chasm. The outlaws are deathly pale, rake-thin and obviously crazed (the troupe counts as a **Vile Gang**). They have seen horrors they dare not remember, and survived by eating bats, lizards and their former comrades. They serve Valdis out of terror, not loyalty; if the companions spare them, or convince them to surrender, then they will guide the Company through the caves to the vampire's lair.

An Ancient Shadow Reborn

Valdis found what she sought: the remains of the Great Vampire (*Rhovanion Region Guide*, page 97). Through vile arts taught to her by the Messenger of Mordor and with the aid of the hungry shade of the Vampire itself, she was able to take the dreadful bat-fell of the creature and drape it around her own body as a cloak. But she didn't obtain the result she was looking for: she became the Great Vampire itself, reborn with the lesser evil of her sinful soul merging with the dark spirit of the monster.

All the Vampires of Mirkwood bowed before their new queen, and at the urging of the Nazgûl she sent them north to attack the Elves.

Valdis herself flapped north to Dale to pursue her dark agenda. In the dead of night she crept into the bedchambers of King Bard and started to feed on his blood. She has been haunting the King since that night, taking just enough to keep him weak and sick, but not enough to kill him; she knows she must wait for her son Girion to reinforce his claim to the throne.

For the last year or more, Valdis travelled back and forth between Dale and the Mountains of Mirkwood. Each time she visited Bard, she left him weaker and less able to rule. By her magic, she avoided his guards, and his physicians were puzzled by the king's continuing weakness.

The Lair of the Vampire

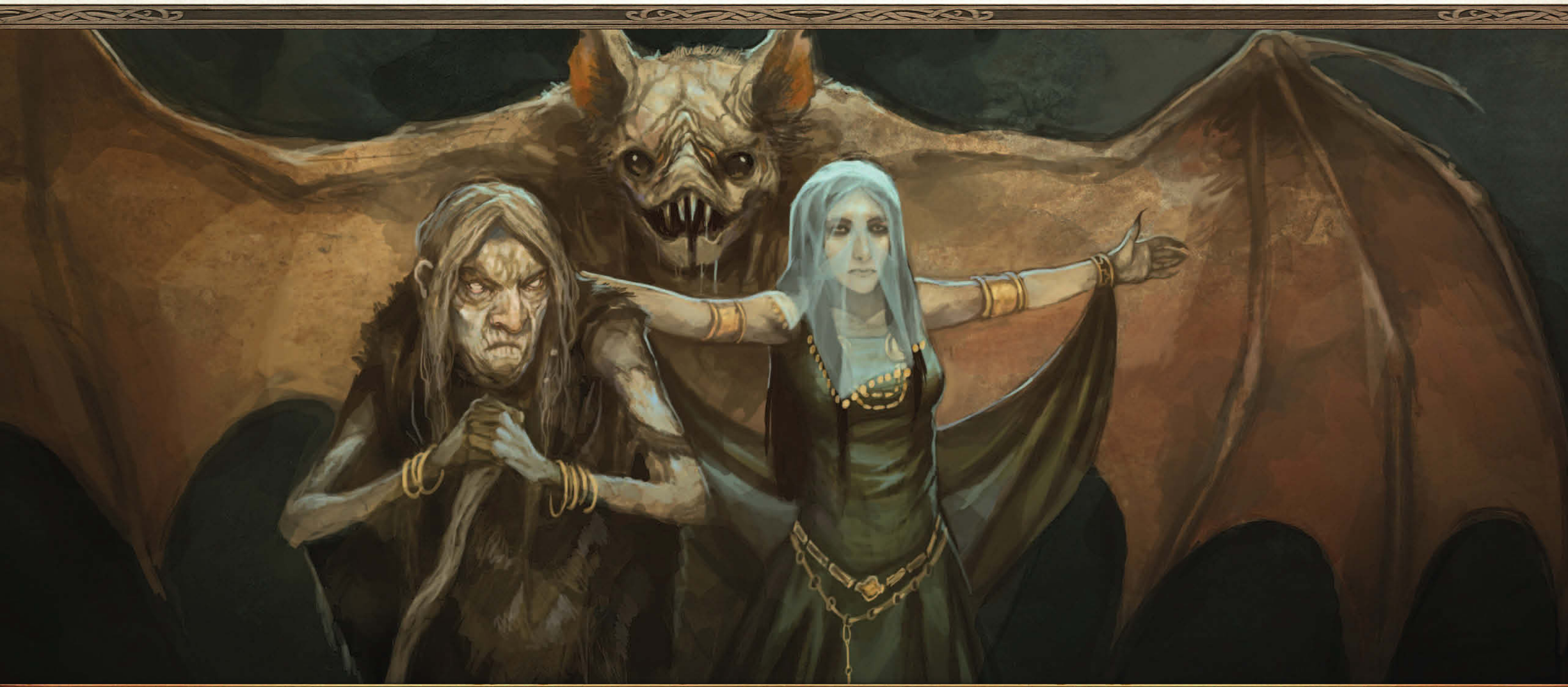
Valdis makes her lair in the huge cavern once used by the Great Vampire. This cathedral of black stone has many bottomless pits and cracks in its floor, so only a flying creature can easily cross from one side to another. Those who cannot take to the air must follow more circuitous routes across the chamber. The ceiling is more than thirty feet high in places, and hundreds of bats nest there.

There is, of course, no light in the cave, and anyone who brings in so much as a candle is smothered by the bats. Valdis's throne – she no longer sleeps – is in the centre of the cavern.

The Great Vampire

Valdis may appear in any of three forms.

First, there is her true shape: an old woman, once comely maybe, but now bent and haggard with long years in the wilderness, wearing only the vile skin of a long-dead Giant Bat draped around her filthy shoulders. Gobbets of dried blood stain her mouth and sagging breasts, and she fumbles blearily amid the bat droppings with sightless eyes. If the Company can sneak into the cavern without making a sound or using any light, this is the form they see.



Second, she can shroud herself in a magical illusion. In this form, she becomes both beautiful and terrible, a dark queen of the night, young and seductive, to be desired and feared in equal measure. If Valdis knows that the companions are coming, she may take on this form and try to seduce one of them (especially if they are Miserable because of the vapours, and therefore vulnerable to her influence). She may also use this form to bargain with the Company.

Third, she can become a huge vampire bat, more vicious than any the companions have yet faced. This is the form she uses when flying to Dale.

An Audience with a Vampire

Instead of attacking as soon as the companions show themselves, Valdis prefers to speak with them. She is a reasonable monster – her plans are nearly complete, and she intends to leave this place for Dale within the year – so she won't take any unnecessary risks.

Valdis may try gambits like the following:

- Valdis offers to withdraw her Vampires from the Woodland Realm, if Thranduil recognises her as Queen of the Mountains of Mirkwood.

- She might promise to lift her curse from King Bard, if her son is named heir to the kingdom of Dale. She claims that young Girion knows nothing of her machinations on his behalf.

- She may point out that the companions are in her stronghold, far from the light, and that she commands Orcs and Vampires and all manner of frightful things. She will spare them... for a price.

Motivation: I deserve to be Queen! If not, at least my son may be King... The Hame is but a means to an end. (While Valdis believes this, she is truly wedded to the Shadow as much as any Ringwraith and will not surrender her power.)

Expectations: **+2** If the companion praise her beauty or cunning; +**1** if they speak well of Girion; -**2** if they tell Valdis that Bain lives; -**2** if they reject her advances or plans.

Valdis, The Great Vampire

Large Fiend

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Armour Class 17 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points 119 (14d10+42)
Speed 20 ft, fly 60 ft

Saving Throws Dexterity +7, Constitution +6, Wisdom +5
Skills Deception +5, Perception +5, Stealth +7
Senses blindsight 60 ft, passive Perception 15
Languages Westron, Orcish, Silvan
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Echolocation. Valdis cannot use her blindsight while Deafened.

Enthrall. As a bonus action, Valdis (in her illusionary form) can force a creature within 60 ft to make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or become Charmed by her. A Miserable Charmed creature gains the **Thrall** ability, see *The Thrall Curse*, opposite page. The Charmed effect lasts until Valdis leaves the area, attacks the Charmed creature, or the creature takes a short rest.

Keen Hearing. Valdis has Advantage on **Wisdom (Perception)** checks that rely on hearing.

Fell Speed. Valdis may take a bonus action to Disengage from one opponent and engage another without provoking an opportunity attack. The new opponent must be within her regular movement rate.

Hard Eyed. Valdis has killed before, and will do so again. She scores a critical hit on any 18, 19 or 20 on an attack roll.

Hate Sunlight. Valdis despises the cleansing light of the Sun. If she is exposed to direct bright sunlight, she takes 3 (1d6) psychic damage each round.

Actions

Multiattack. Valdis makes three attacks: Biting once and making two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage and the target must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or gain 1 Shadow point as the vampire feeds on their blood.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4+4) slashing damage.

Bewilder. Valdis can briefly assume the appearance of a beautiful woman. In this form, she can only use her Enthrall ability.

Reactions

Snake-like Speed (Recharge 5-6). Valdis is adept at avoiding injury and can use her reaction to halve the attack damage on an attack that she is aware of.

Battling Valdis

In addition to Valdis herself, there are uncountable Great Bats, Goblin Archers and Orc Soldiers in the caverns. As soon as fighting starts, these minions flood into the chamber (at least one of each kind joins the battle each round until Valdis is defeated). The Company can use the terrain to their advantage by moving to one of the rocky 'islands' (see pages 95-96 of the *Loremaster's Guide* for possible scenery features), but that also risks cutting off their line of retreat.

If Valdis is reduced to 59 or less hit points, she flaps towards the exit at the southern edge of the cavern. Should the companions pursue her through the maze of tunnels and passageways, they arrive at another cave-mouth high above Mirkwood just in time to see a huge bat-winged shape flapping away into the night. The companions should be content with surviving the encounter and returning home with precious information. Valdis flees north to Dale and her son. She may be encountered again in 2973, in the adventure *The Reach of the Shadow*.

The Thrall Curse

A Miserable companion Charmed by the Great Vampire gains the Thrall special ability, with the Great Vampire as the hero's master. Whenever an attack roll is made against Valdis and you have movement remaining you must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or use your reaction and become the target of the attack instead.

If Valdis is slain, or you take a short rest, you are no longer subject to this effect.

Year's End

If the companions slay Valdis and retrieve the Hame of the Great Vampire, they might elect to take it to Thranduil. If they do so, he locks the foul thing in one of his deepest chambers. The Elvenking relaxes his restrictions slightly and holdings in the Woodland Realm and around Lake-town, Dale and Erebor see their DC for Holding Upkeep checks reduced by 2 for this year.

- Year 2973 -

for heroes of level 13 or 14

Events

The worst of the plague is past. While some fall ill this winter, there are few new outbreaks. Most of those who are still alive are immune to the disease.

The precipitious fall in the numbers of Woodmen means that they are now too few to sustain all their settlements. Some leave their homes and travel to larger communities like Woodmen-town; others vanish into the forest.

Bofri and the other Dwarves who came south to open the Old Forest Road are found dead in one of their waystations. From the signs, it seems that they were attacked by bandits or warriors from Dol Guldur.

The quarrels between Prince Bain and young Girion continue. While it has not yet come to open war, the two continue to gather allies.

Adventuring Phase: The Reach of the Shadow

In the Northern Dalelands just beyond the eastern edge of Mirkwood, north of the River Running, lies a tall green mound. A lord of Dale named Orlmond built his castle there and today it is a mighty fortress by the standards of the North, with Dwarf-wrought gates and high towers, for Orlmond is a wealthy man.

Orlmond's role in this adventure depends on the current state of Dale, and the nature of the Company:

- If the Company aided Prince Bain and helped him to force young Girion out of Dale, then Orlmond is an ally of Girion, one of the greedy lords whose ambition led them to oppose King Bard and support Girion in the first place. Recently, Orlmond sent a message to Prince Bain, inviting him to feast in his castle and to hunt in Mirkwood, so they could discuss their recent differences. This offer was a trap – Girion and his men were waiting for Bain, and now he is a prisoner in the castle.

- Conversely, if Prince Bain is still in exile somewhere in Wilderland, then Orlmond is one of his few allies. Orlmond has long been a friend of the Elves. Prince Bain went to visit Orlmond, but while he was at the castle, it was attacked by Girion's men. The castle was taken by treachery, and now Bain is a prisoner in the castle, while Orlmond is a hostage in his own home – Girion hopes that Orlmond will switch sides.

So, either way, Prince Bain is a prisoner in the castle of Orlmond, and must be rescued. Prince Bain's squire, faithful Ottarr, escaped the castle and went in search of help.

The Plight of the Prince

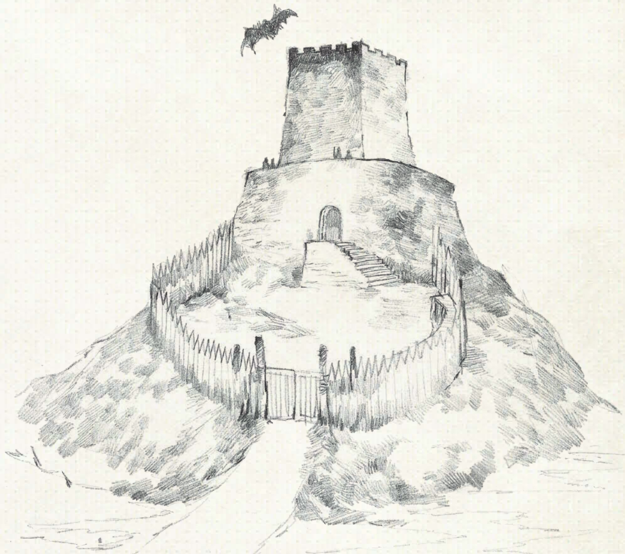
Ottarr seeks out the companions and tells them that Prince Bain is imprisoned in Orlmond Castle. He begs for their help in rescuing his master from young Girion.

Companions wise in the matters of politics and diplomacy understand the dilemma: if Girion's imprisonment of the prince becomes public knowledge – say, if Ottarr brought word to Dale itself – then it would certainly lead to open conflict between Bain's supporters and Girion's men. If the Company can rescue Bain quietly, then it will avoid a civil war.

Castle Orlmond

Castle Orlmond is a new fortification, consisting of a tall central keep surrounded by a stone wall. Another wooden wall encompasses a larger bailey-yard in front of the keep. The steep-sided mound is the castle's best defence, especially as the moat at the base of the mound is filled with black, leech-ridden mud and sharp stones.

The castle is guarded by some thirty Warriors, all loyal to Girion. Many of the cottagers and foresters in the land nearby support him, so Girion can call hundreds more men to his banner if he is attacked openly. If that wasn't enough, the pretender has also brought a number of mercenaries from the East with him (use the Easterling Warriors on page 72 of *Wilderland Adventures*). Young Bain and Orlmond are of course there too. Finally, if the Company failed to slay Girion's mother Valdis in the adventure *The Hame of the Vampire* (page 107), then she too is in the castle. Prince Bain and his surviving companions are imprisoned in the dungeons of the keep.



Honeyed Words

Should the companions meet young Girion, the pretender tries to woo them to his cause. Girion certainly looks the part – the handsome hero might be a marble statue brought to life or a champion who leapt from the pages of a saga of old. He speaks of the potential greatness of Dale, how all the North can be brought together in a single kingdom like in the days of old, when all Rhovanion was one. He claims that he does not wish to steal King Bard's throne, but Bard's claim to kingship rests on a single bow-shot, nothing more. There is still time to restore the ancient line, the true line of Girion. Those who support him, he hints, will be well rewarded with land and gold and titles when he is king.

Sneaking into the Castle

There are three possible routes for entering the castle:

- **Through the front gate:** The Company could just try walking in, either in disguise (as wandering mercenaries or minstrels), or brazenly as themselves, feigning that they know nothing of Orlmond's imprisonment of Prince Bain. Convicing Orlmond to let them in requires a **DC 20 Intelligence (Traditions)** or **Charisma (Persuasion)** check, based on whether Orlmond is a prisoner himself or not.

- **Over the walls:** A good burglar could climb over the wooden outer wall easily, sneak up through the outbuildings and sheds in the bailey, then find a way over the sturdy inner wall and from there into the keep. Doing so requires at least three **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth)** checks.

- **The gutter stream:** A stream of water – black with filth and waste from the castle kitchens – runs down the steep western side of the mound. An adventurous thief with a strong stomach could climb up this steep, stony gutter and somehow find a way through the iron grating where it runs under the outer stone wall. From there, they can follow the stream into the keep via a narrow tunnel. Climbing up the gutter stream is a **DC 10 Athletics** check.

Once in the keep, the companions must find a way down into the dungeon. The only door is locked, and the key kept by Orlmond. Furthermore, the door is guarded by a ferocious hound (a beast as strong as a Wolf Leader) that savagely attacks any intruders. Getting past Girion's hound without raising the alarm is almost impossible – an Elf with the gift of *The Speakers* might be able to soothe the beast with a **DC 15 Charisma (Performance)**, a Woodman who keeps her own hound might make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check to calm it or someone with Herb-lore could make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine)** check to drug the beast with the right herbs mixed in with its meat.

Prince Bain is kept in a lightless cell in the dungeon. When the Company rescues him, he decides that it is time that Girion pay for his crimes once and for all, and asks them to accompany him as he storms the castle above. Move onto *Storming the Castle*, below.

Gathering Allies

Should the companions prefer to besiege the castle, they must first gather allies. There are four prospective factions they might call on for aid:

- **Dale.** Travelling to the town of Dale itself means walking into the lion's den. Girion has many supporters and allies in Dale, especially in the Royal Palace. Most dangerous of all, though, is Valdis herself. The Great Vampire regularly visits King Bard to keep the king weak and delirious. If Valdis is still alive, then she may attack any companions who travel to Dale.

  If the companions have already dealt with the Vampire queen, then King Bard is on the mend. With healing and inspiring words, they can rouse the old man (he is over sixty years old by now) and have him ride out once more to put down the pretender and rescue his son.

- **In the Dalelands.** The locals are supporters of Girion, and have long grudges against the Elves. However, if the Company can convince them that the Woodland Realm is not to be feared, and that young Girion is a traitor in league with dark forces, they can cut Girion's support off and deny him reinforcements.

- **Erebor.** A Dwarf of good reputation can plead with King Dáin to intercede, and send warriors to besiege Castle Orlmond. The Dwarves helped build the keep, and know it well. They know how to break down the gates and breach the walls.

- **The Elves of Mirkwood.** Thranduil's Halls are not far from Castle Orlmond, and the soldiers of the wood are few in number but great in valour. Thranduil knows, though, that the strength of the Elves is doomed to dwindle, and must be convinced to spend a portion of that strength on mortal affairs.

Besieging the Castle

The difficulty of besieging the castle varies depending on the preparations made by the Company and the allies they have. If the companions are few in number, then taking a strong castle defended by so many foes will be very difficult (anyone proficient with **History** knows that, traditionally, the attacker needs at least three times as many warriors as the defender to take a fortified castle). However, if the companions gather a huge force behind them, then the courage of Girion's men flees them and they surrender.

If Girion does not yield, then the swords will decide. The Loremaster should describe in broad strokes the course of the battle — how the defenders hurl down boiling oil and arrows; how the attackers breach the gate and burst into the bailey; how the foes are driven back up the hill and so forth — and concentrate on the actions and the point of view of the companions.

Young Girion is no coward, and takes part in the battle. If the fighting takes place at night, then his mother may also join the fray.

GIRION

Medium Human

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)

Armour Class 20 (Scale Hauberk and Great Shield)
Hit Points 78 (12d8+24)
Speed 30 ft

Skills Perception +1, Survival +1, Traditions +2
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Westron
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Leadership. As a bonus action, Girion can command a nearby Warrior to take his turn immediately after Girion's turn.

Savage Assault. When Girion rolls a natural 18 or 19 he may use his bonus action to make a single additional melee attack against the same opponent.

Actions

Multiattack. Girion makes three melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage or 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage if used with both hands.

STORMING THE CASTLE

Once it becomes clear that the battle is lost, young Girion and his guards retreat back to the keep and lock the doors behind them to make their last stand in the great arched feast-hall above. What the companions find there when they finally force open the doors depends on their previous actions:

- **If Valdis is still alive:** the companions find that all the guards are dead. Climbing the stairs to the main hall, they discover that Valdis has drained the blood from all her son's soldiers. As they enter, the Vampire drops the body she holds and attacks.

  If the companions have not yet rescued Prince Bain, then she has just drained his blood. The Company can still save him, but he needs immediate assistance.

  If Prince Bain is free, then in her thirst and madness Valdis turned on her own son! Girion lies dead at her feet.

- **If Valdis is dead, and Prince Bain is a captive:** the companions enter the great hall to see Girion holding Bain hostage, a dagger to his throat. Words come spilling out of Girion, about how he is destined to rule Dale and how he is the only true heir.

  *Girion was unaware of his mother's machinations, and is convinced that he is an enemy of the Shadow. The Company can try to convince Girion to surrender with a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)** check.*

  Alternatively, they can find a way to stop him from stabbing Bain – say, with an accurate bow-shot.

- **If Girion has neither Valdis nor Bain:** The young lord loses his mind and fights to the death, screaming that the companions are servants of the Shadow, and that doom has come.

YEAR'S END

Any companion who helped in healing King Bard or in saving Prince Bain may choose the Receive Title (Barding Thegn) undertaking this year (see box below).

Receive Title (Barding Thegn)

King Bard has invited the companion to enter his service as a thegn, as a recognition for his deeds. To accept the title, the adventurer must spend the Fellowship phase in Dale and choose the *Receive Title* undertaking. The companion is granted a tract of land to dwell upon, either in the Northern Dalelands, or in the Upper or Nether Marches. The land grant can serve as a holding and its initial Rating is equal to half the hero's Proficiency Bonus, rounded down.

- YEAR 2974 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 14 OR 15

EVENTS

Word is sent from Woodmen-town that a great folk-moot will be held at midsummer next year, to discuss the fate of the Houses.

A fierce storm strikes the land of the Beornings, scattering their herds and tearing the roofs from their homes.

ADVENTURING PHASE: BEORN'S QUEST

Beorn calls his most trusted men to him; if the companions are among those he considers friends, then they are counted in this number. They meet in secret at the Carrock one night.

"I have to go away for a while," says Beorn. "There are things I must do. If I do not come back, then my son Grimbeorn will take my place when he is of age. Until then, he will be in the care and tutelage of his mother, and some of you will have to run things in my absence. Do not meddle in the affairs of others, do not let anyone tell you what to do. And try not to upset my bees."

He then turns to the companions. "I'll need company on the journey. I won't bother warning you that it will be dangerous and we might well all die horribly – I gather those are the sort of journeys you're used to. So, are you coming?"

The Werewolf

If one of the Company has become the new Werewolf of Mirkwood (see *The Dying of the Light*) then Beorn insists that he come with Beorn on his journey. There is, says Beorn, someone that the skinchanger must talk to.

INTO THE MISTY MOUNTAINS

The companions set off from Beorn's stead and travel west, towards the purple line of the Misty Mountains in the distance. They cross the Great River at the Carrock, then their path takes to the north-west, to the tallest peaks where the Eagles make their nests. Indeed, the companions see a number of great birds circling far overhead. Beorn waves at them, but instead of landing they wheel around and fly west, travelling very fast and very far as if they intend to cross the sea.

The early parts of the journey pass uneventfully. Beorn refuses to talk about where they are going, saying that he is sworn to secrecy. They will see what they see, he says, and think what they think, and that is the end of that – if they get there.

From Beorn's House to the mountains covers some sixty miles of easy terrain. This land is watched by the Beornings, and there are no dangers; indeed, the Beornings in that region welcome the Company to stay with them each night. After that, though, their journey takes them across the trackless foothills of the Misty Mountains for some forty miles.

The journey starts *From Auspicious Beginnings* and prompts 1d2 Journey Events before the Company reaches the mountains. The Peril Rating is 3, Beorn is leading the Company into a region where travellers rarely go.

ATTACK OF THE MOUNTAIN-TROLLS

As the companions travel, stones begin to rain down on them from far above. They have trespassed into the territory of a pack of Mountain-trolls, who haunt the peaks far above. The thick mists shroud the Trolls from view, so the companions are taken by surprise.

As the rocks fall all around them, each member of the Company must make a **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw. On a failure, the hero takes 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage or half of that on a successful save. A hero that fails by 5 or more has been knocked Prone by the rocks. Prone heroes must make another saving throw (as above) before they escape the deadly stone downpour.

If the companions survive this initial assault, they can climb the cliffs to attack the Mountain-trolls or ignore them and run past. If they attack the trolls, there is one Mountain-troll for each hero. Beorn will not join the fight unless the heroes plead... he considers them foolish to have attacked the trolls over their sport.

9 Crossing the Border

Beorn leads the Company higher and higher, past the snow-line, into a grey realm of jagged peaks and howling winds. The air is frightfully thin and cold up here, on the roof of the world. At night, the stars are strange, as if huge unseen shapes pressed against the firmament from the far side.

"We are almost there," says Beorn through his frost-rimed beard. "If you want to turn back now, you can. If you want to come with me, though, then you must promise never to speak to anyone about what you see from this point on."

The next day is the hardest of all. It is as though the landscape was created to stop anyone crossing it. Every foothold is treacherous and tries to send the traveller falling to the sharp rocks below. The wind is a malicious thing that deliberately tries to push a traveller off-course, or blows snow and dust into their eyes. The biting cold is malicious.

- All characters must make three **DC 15 Constitution** saving throws. Heroes that pass two or more of the saving throws can continue, but other companions find their bodies falling on them in the thin air and biting cold. They cannot continue.

14 The Guardian

At the end of the day, the companions arrive at a sheer cliff that blocks their path. From certain angles though, the cliff looks like a gigantic stone face, as if an immense giant was buried in the living rock of the mountain. Beorn calls out to the face.

"Ho, old one. Wake up and let us pass."

A mighty echo makes the booming voice of Beorn crack like thunder. The ground shakes. Rocks fall as part of the cliff crumbles. When the dust subsides, it is as if the features of the face changed, and its eyes opened! A deep, vibrant voice seem to emerge from the very roots of the mountain, making the legs of the companions tremble.

"HRMMM. WHO WAKES ME? IS THAT YOU, BEORN?"

"Let me past, old one. I have business beyond."

"WHO ELSE IS THAT WHO WALKS ON MY SNOWY BEARD?"

The companions should introduce themselves. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Traditions)** check is in order, and anyone brazen enough to try and use **Intimidation** or **Riddle** on a mountain makes Beorn erupt with laughter. But the voice is unimpressed anyway. It scorns the Company and their words.

"MORTALS AND STRAY ELVES, BEORN? NOTHING MORE? YOU INSULT ME..."

Beorn beckons the Company aside and explains what is happening.

"This thing is not necessarily an evil thing, but the life and the problems of mortals are but a trifle to it. I had hoped that it would let us past on my word alone, but the world is changing. If you want to get past, then you have to pay a toll. Impress it somehow, take a vow or give it something."

Suitable gifts for the guardian include:

- Some wonderful treasure (worth 50g or more).
- Taking a vow never to cross the Misty Mountains again (the companion might still travel west by taking the Gap of Rohan).
- Singing a song for the guardian that makes it weep (a **DC 18 Charisma (Performance)** check)

Otherwise, the Company and Beorn are stuck. They cannot push through, and Beorn will be forced to lead them back, before eventually returning alone.

The Other Side

If the companions pay the guardian its due, after a while they spot a narrow set of stairs that wasn't there before, leading to a secret vale in the mountains. Thick fog turns the vale into a strange, ghostly land. Beorn leads the Company through the mist-shrouded trees.

Some time later, the companions feel an irresistible urge to lay down and sleep. Beorn is feeling the need to rest too and invites the companions to lay down and stop worrying. When they wake up, night has come and the sky is alight with a thousand stars. The mist still covers most of their surroundings.

The Hunter Comes

14

After a while, the heroes hear a hunting horn in the distance and the sound of thundering hooves. Keen-eyed companions believe they see a rider approaching, and moments later everyone sees the terrifying, awesome figure of a hunter on horseback, Man-like, yet greater in size, accompanied by four huge bears who follow him like hounds.

Beorn bows his head. *"Show no fear, but raise no weapon. We must be resolute."*

And then the Hunter is upon them, like the crashing of a great wave, like an onrushing storm. This rider is neither Elf nor mortal Man, but a being older and stronger than the Dark Lord himself. All companions must make a **Wisdom** saving throw, with a **DC** equal to 10, plus the companion's current Shadow rating.

- Any companions who fail are unable to endure the presence of the Hunter and must flee before him. If all the companions fail, then Beorn is taken by the Hunter and is never seen again.

- If more than half the companions fail, the Hunter shakes his head. Beorn nods, then turns to the Company. *"I must leave you know. When my son Grimbeorn is of age, bring him here so he may take my mantle."*

- If half or more the companions succeed, then the Hunter salutes them. Beorn bows, and the Hunter rides by. *"I pass the test,"* says Beorn, *"he has seen that I am still a friend to the Free Peoples."*

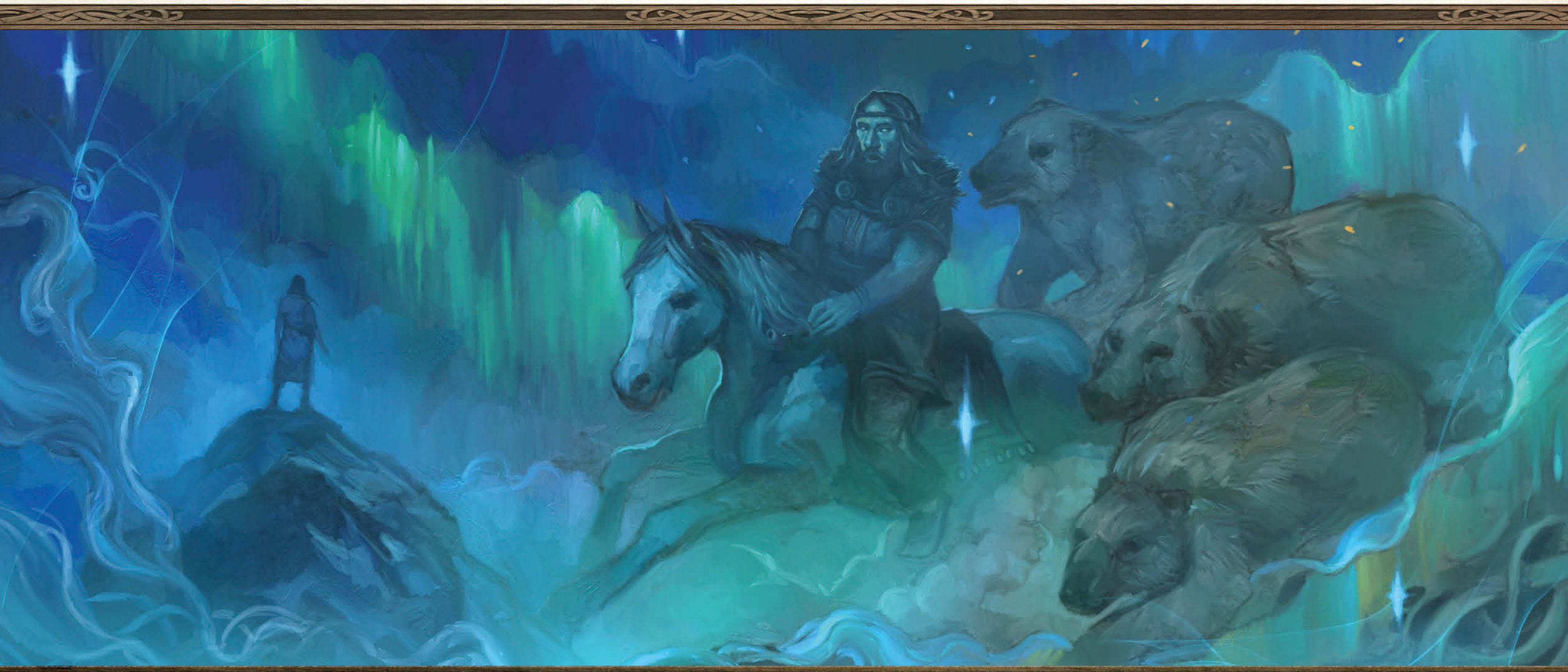
- If the entire Company succeeds, then the Hunter blows a triumphant blast on the hunting horn. All present companions raise their **Wisdom** score by 2 and now have a maximum for that ability of 22. Beorn is overjoyed, and explains that the Hunter has honoured the Company. They may return to the lowlands with joy in their hearts.

If Beorn is still with the companions in their return journey, they may ask the skinchanger about the strange Hunter as they descend the mountains. The old skinchanger shrugs his vast shoulders. *"The Hunter has many names,"* he says. *"Béma, some in the North call him, for his voice can be heard for miles. Araw, the Elves name him, for the same reason. He has been a friend to the Elves since he found them, long long ago. He dwells in the West, far away..."*

Year's End

14

Nothing of note.



The Werewolf of Mirkwood

If one of the companions is possessed by the spirit of the Werewolf of Mirkwood, then she must make a more difficult Wisdom saving throw when confronted by the Hunter. The DC is equal to 15, plus the companion's Shadow rating.

The skinchanging hero knows that if she fails the test, the Hunter will take her. The companion also knows that she may enjoy a better chance to please the Hunter by taking on geases, imposing on herself a number of magical obligations.

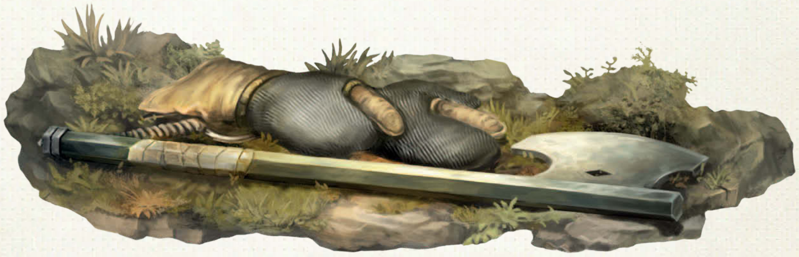
The hero may reduce the DC by accepting one or more strictures (DC -2 for each obligation). Should the companion ever fail to honour the geases she has taken on (if any) she will gain a point of Shadow and her skinchanging powers will fail her for one full year.

For each vow, roll a d12:

1. The Hunter imposes a particularly grievous geas, roll twice more on this table but reduce the DC only by 2.
2. Never eat meat in a particular place (choose a location or region).
3. Never eat anything but one type of food (choose one).
4. Never cross a stream of running water in a particular season (choose one).
5. Never embark upon a journey under a full moon.
6. Never quarrel or fight with a member of a certain folk (choose one Culture).
7. Never refuse to give quarter to a member of a certain folk (choose one Culture).
8. Never sleep under the same roof as your fellow companions.
9. Never refuse the demand of a Wizard.
10. Never flee from an enemy (choose one enemy creature type).
11. Never fail to return home on Yule-tide.
12. Choose a geas of any type or roll again.

If the skinchanger eventually fails the Wisdom saving throw, then the Hunter takes the companion with him when he leaves, removing her from the campaign forever.

If the test is passed, then the curse of the Werewolf is lifted, and the companion is granted permission to take on the shape of a wolf, just as Beorn can become a bear: the skinchanger may reduce her Shadow score by 3 points and from now on she does not need to make a saving throw against Corruption when she takes a Fellowship phase. The evil of the Werewolf is cleansed, and the beast can now be a force for good.



THE DARKENING OF MIRKWOOD:
- 2975-2977 -

The Shadow over the forest grows, and life in Mirkwood outside the Woodland Realm becomes untenable. The Woodmen are faced with a choice between fleeing or making a last desperate assault on Dol Guldur.

- YEAR 2975 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 14 OR 15

Events

Dol Guldur looses a tide of evil on the wood. Orcs pour out of Fenbridge Castle, and Spiders cross the Dusky River using webbing as bridges.

Dark stormclouds hang low over the whole of Mirkwood for weeks at a time, deepening the gloom and terrifying the animals.

In the north, meltwater from the Grey Mountains causes the Forest River to burst its banks and become unnavigable for weeks. The force of the rushing river is enough to tear down the ancient stone bridge outside Thranduil's halls. Pushed by the Wayward Elves (and by his own dark moods, if he woke up from his poisoned sleep in 2970) the Elvenking himself rides south to Woodmen-town, accompanied by a host of Elves, to seek the return of the Lamp.

Adventuring Phase: The Last Folk-Moot

The Woodmen gather at Woodmen-town. Ten years ago, the great hall here could not have held more than a fraction of their warriors and chieftains. Now, all the champions of the Houses of the Woodmen gather here and the hall is not even crowded. The Lamp of Balthi hangs above them, its light undiminished despite the gathering gloom outside.

The war-leader of the Woodmen addresses the diminished crowd. After he speaks, other Woodmen advocate the other options listed below.

If Mogdred is the war-leader — or if Ceawin is the leader, and he is still in the thrall of the Wood-wight — then the war-leader calls for an attack on Dol Guldur. For too long the Woodmen have suffered in the darkness. The White Council drove the Shadow away thirty years ago. What Wizards can do, surely the brave warriors of the Wood can do so too? They shall march with the Lamp of Balthi as their banner, and lift the Shadow from the forest.

If another Loremaster character is the war-leader, then they speak sadly of the plight of the Woodmen. The plague and other horrors have robbed the Woodmen of their strength. Few children remain alive.

Madness and death stalk the forest. Perhaps it is time to leave their homes, to seek a better life elsewhere in Wilderland. They could flee north, to the land of the Beornings, or to the cold forests of Northern Mirkwood, and abandon the halls of their ancestors.

Other Woodmen elders insist that they must endure. There have been dark years before, when the Shadow lay heavily on the forest. They can survive here, as their forefathers did, if only they have courage. The Lamp will protect them.

The Elves Arrive

King Thranduil and a retinue of Elven warriors arrive at twilight. The Elvenking asks for permission to enter out of courtesy, but will not take no for an answer, nor do the Woodmen have the strength to bar their door against the Elvenking and his warriors. Inside, Thranduil points to the shining Lamp of Balthi.

"That Lamp was made by my kin, and hung from the door of my father's hall. It belongs to the Elves, and must be returned to us. In my hall it will be safe. Leave it here, and the Enemy will take it and destroy it."

Some of the Woodmen seem willing to listen to the Elves; others angrily argue back, saying that Thranduil is trying to steal their last treasure, their last hope with Elvish trickery.

One overly impetuous young warrior even picks up his axe – and suddenly freezes as if mesmerised. An old man in drab brown robes emerges from the shadows in the corner. Radagast the Brown raises his voice and challenges Thranduil.

"The Lamp was made by the Elves of Hollin, my lord, not your kin. If any living soul owns that Lamp, then it is Elrond of Rivendell who has the best claim, for those few who survived the ruin of Hollin now reside in his hidden valley. The Lamp should go to Rivendell."

The First Choice

Radagast turns to the companions. "Your deeds are known to all who stand here. They shall abide by your decision. What is to be done with the Lamp?"

The players must choose the fate of the Lamp of Balthi:

- If they leave the Lamp where it stands, then the Woodmen have the best chance of survival, but the Lamp will be in terrible danger. The forces of Dol Guldur know where the Lamp is, and they will keep trying to destroy it.

- If they leave the Lamp to Thranduil, then he will lock it away in his vaults. The Lamp will continue to shine its light over Mirkwood, and maybe that will be enough to keep the Shadow out of the northern forest – but the land of the Woodmen will certainly fall under the Shadow.

- If they send the Lamp to Rivendell, then it will be safe (or, at least, as safe as any place in Middle-earth can be), but Mirkwood will be lost to the Shadow. The Elves may endure, but the Woodmen have little chance of surviving in Mirkwood.

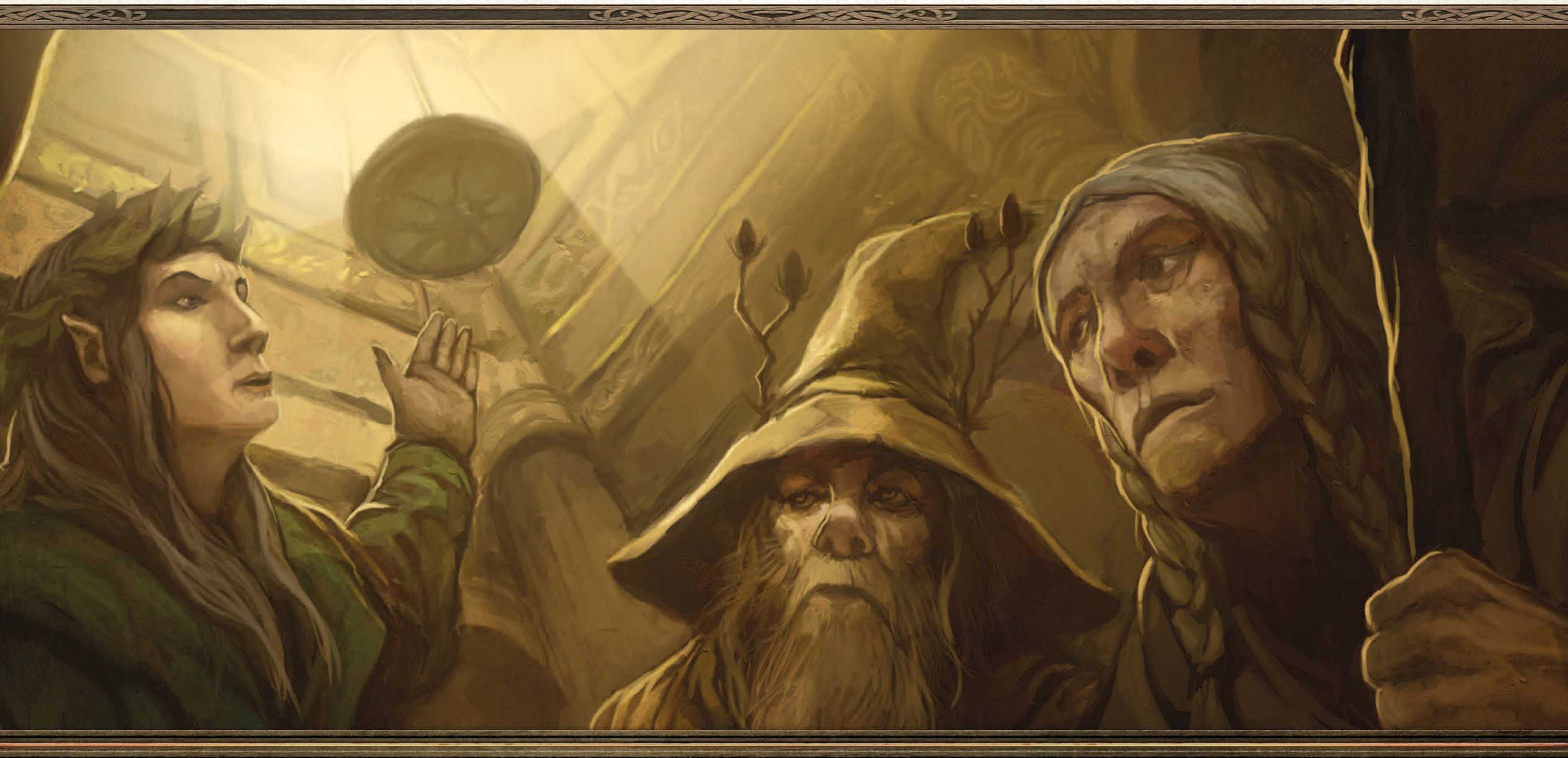
Radagast will advise the companions, but the ultimate decision is theirs. If the companions do not choose to give the Lamp to Thranduil, then the Elvenking respects their decision, but many of the Wayward Elves do not. Their hostility grows, as they no longer accept Thranduil as king.

The Second Choice

Once the companions have decided what to do with the Lamp, the Woodmen must decide what they will do next.

Only Woodmen companions may speak in this last debate, or those who have been recognised as Heroes of the Woodmen (see page 86).

Do they advocate for an attack on Dol Guldur, to stay where they are or to abandon their halls and leave Mirkwood?



If the war-leader of the Woodmen serves Dol Guldur (Mogdred or a still-possessed Ceawin), then they continue to press for an attack on the black hold. Otherwise, the war-leader's recommended course of action is determined by the fate of the Lamp. A passionate companion could convince the Woodmen to follow one path or another.

If the folk-moot has decided for an attack on Dol Guldur, the Woodmen begin mustering their forces. The companions may wish to summon allies or call in any debts they have obtained over the course of the campaign. The actual attack takes place next year.

- Next year play the adventure *The March of the Woodmen.*

If the folk-moot has resolved to send the Lamp of Balthi to the safety of Rivendell, then someone has to carry it over the Misty Mountains and find the hidden vale of Imladris.

- Next year play the adventure *To Rivendell.*

If the folk-moot accepted to give the Lamp to Thranduil, then the Elvenking carries it back to his halls. If the Woodmen decided to guard their borders, then without the protection of the Lamp, the Western Eaves are overrun by the Shadow in the coming years.

YEAR'S END

Nothing of note.

- YEAR 2976 -

FOR HEROES OF LEVEL 15 OR HIGHER

EVENTS

If the Lamp of Balthi is taken from Woodmen-town, then the Western Eaves of Mirkwood become first a Wild Land; then, both the Western Eaves and Western Mirkwood degenerate into Shadow Lands. The Heart of Mirkwood and the Narrows of the Forest become Dark Lands. The Peril Rating of any journey in these areas is raised by 1 as well.

If the Elves of Mirkwood possess the Lamp of Balthi, then there is light and feasting in the halls of Thranduil. Any Elf of Mirkwood may spend Inspiration to reduce their Shadow score by 2 (this may only be done once per hero). If the Woodmen chose to leave their halls, then they settle in the lands of the Beornings and the fringes of Northern Mirkwood. Raising new settlements is hard work, and many will perish in the cold years to come.

If the folk-moot chose to assault Dol Guldur, play *The March of the Woodmen* this year. If the Lamp will be taken to the Last Homely House, play *To Rivendell.*

ADVENTURING PHASE: THE MARCH OF THE WOODMEN

War-bands from all Houses of the Woodmen gather at Woodmen-town. Warriors come from Woodland Hall and Rhosgobel. If the companions have good relations with the folk of Mountain Hall, then they send many warriors too; otherwise, the Mountain-folk send only a handful of hardy axe-men, but keep the greater part of their strength back. If the Tyrant's Hill or Sunstead are still part of the Woodmen, then they too send warriors.

If the Woodmen carry the Lamp of Balthi with them as their banner, then its light seems to change as it is lifted aloft, becoming more fiery and piercing as if the Lamp senses the darkness of the hour.

The war-leader must determine the tactics for the army. Do they take boats down to the Black Tarn or do they march along the banks of the Dusky River? Do they march out in the open, following the edge of the forest down the Vales of Anduin, or use the forest as cover and try to take the enemy by surprise?

Death at Day's Ending

An attack on Dol Guldur is a doomed endeavour. The warriors who go to war will never return. Any companions who embark on this quest will likely perish. The Loremaster should tell the players this before the adventure begins - as it is what their characters know in their hearts. Victory is impossible. However, if the Woodmen inflict enough damage on the forces of Dol Guldur, they can drive back the darkness for many years. They could buy time for the Woodmen to survive for another generation or two in the woods. The companions may well die here – but their deeds will live on.

Tracking the Fighting Strength of the Woodmen

The numbers and combat ability of the Woodmen force is measured using a value called Fighting Strength. Fighting Strength starts at 7, and is increased as follows:

- +1 if Mountain Hall sends warriors
- +1 if the Tyrant's Hill sends warriors
- +1 if Sunstead sends warriors
- +1 per ally the Company brings
- +3 if the companions bring the Lamp of Balthi

If the Fighting Strength of the Woodmen is ever reduced to 0, then their army is vanquished and scattered.

TREACHERY

If the war-leader of the Woodmen is in the service of Dol Guldur, then he leads them into a trap. He urges them on, faster and faster, to take the enemy by surprise. This haste means that the Woodmen Scouts cannot range ahead of the advancing forces to give adequate warning and the

army finds itself trapped between Fenbridge Castle (or Dol Guldur) and a host of Orcs and Spiders that emerge from the trees. Pit the companions against many Orcs, Trolls and Hunter Spiders… there are at least one of each foe-kind for each hero.

- The ambush reduces Fighting Strength by 1d6.

14 Fenbridge Castle

The second obstacle to be overcome is Fenbridge Castle. This fortress blocks the only safe path to Dol Guldur. The Woodmen can choose to either besiege the castle or else try crossing the swamps beyond it.

Besieging the castle drains the army's Fighting Strength by 1 point per day. Each day, roll a d20. On the result of 20, the castle falls. Reduce this threshold by 2 each day. So, on the second day of siege, the castle falls on a 18+, on the third 16+, and so on.

- Heroic actions by the companions, such as scaling the walls, slaying monsters or sneaking into the castle allow Advantage on the next day's check.
- If a companion is the war-leader, a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation)** or **Intelligence (Lore)** check reduces the threshold by 1, or by 3 if the hero's total is 20 or higher.

The swamps are a death trap for a whole army, and many Woodmen perish in the mud. If this road is taken, then the Fighting Strength of the Woodmen is reduced by 1d6.

15 The Battle of Dol Guldur

Finally, the Woodmen come to the very gate of the Hill of Sorcery, and the full strength of Dol Guldur is loosed upon them. The battle begins with a sudden wave of unreasoning terror; each companion must pass a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw – if more than half the heroes fail this test, they are Surprised as the battle begins. This fear also reduces the Fighting Strength of the Woodmen by 1.

Next, the Loremaster should roll a d12 and consult the table below to determine what sort of foes the Company faces. Each roll also reduces the Fighting Strength of the Woodmen. Roll at the beginning of each round, stopping only when all the companions are dead, or when the Fighting Strength of the Woodmen is reduced to 0. The result of the roll takes effect at the end of the current round (usually meaning that more enemies join the battle for the next round). The Loremaster should note the number of times that he rolls on the Battle of Dol Guldur table – each roll means that the Shadow of the Enemy is lifted from Mirkwood for a little longer.

Roll	Foes	Fighting Strength Reduction
1	The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur rides forth in full panoply of battle to face the companions. Roll again on this table to determine his bodyguard – on a **1** another Nazgûl joins him, reroll a result of **12**.	-3
2	One of the Children of Shelob arrives.	-2
3	Mountain-trolls (one for every two heroes)	-2
4	Black-uruks (one per hero), led by a Great Orc	-2
5	Wood-wights (one per hero)	-1
6	A swarm of Spiders (two Attercops and one Hunter Spider per hero)	-1
7	A pack of Wargs (one Wild Wolf per hero, led by a Hound of Sauron)	-1
8	Servants of Tyrant's Hill (two servants and two Savage Hounds per hero) *These could be brigands of the Toft if Amon Bauglir is no more.*	-1
9	A host of Forest Goblins (two per hero)	0
10	A miserable, beaten force of slaves (use Thugs) and Wild Men of Mirkwood. (One each per hero.)	0
11	A pack of shrieking Goblin Archers and Orc Soldiers (one each per hero).	0
12	A breathing space – the battle moves away from the Company long enough that they may take a short rest.	0

15 Aftermath

The companions – and a whole generation of Woodmen warriors – lie dead beneath the trees. What have they won with their heroism? Compare the number of rolls on the table above to the entries below:

Number of Rolls	Result
1	Dol Guldur cannot attack this year, so any surviving Woodmen families can flee safely, but all of Mirkwood south of the Elf-path is lost to the darkness.
2-3	The Shadow is beaten back for a few years, giving the Woodmen time to rebuild, but they cannot escape the Shadow.
4-5	The sons of the Woodmen who died here will face a renewed Shadow in the years to come, but there may be as many as ten years of peace.
6-10	A generation lives peacefully in Mirkwood, as the wounded Shadow retreats to lick its wounds and rebuild its strength. The Woodmen survive in Mirkwood.
11 or more	The power of Dol Guldur is broken. The Woodmen thrive in Mirkwood until the War of the Ring brings new enemies from the East and South.

Adventuring Phase: To Rivendell

The journey to Rivendell is a long one and perilous even in good years, and this is far from a good year. The Enemy can sense the movement of the Lamp of Balthi, and will not let it go easily. The Messenger of Mordor is dispatched from Dol Guldur to recover the Lamp before it reaches Rivendell.

15 The Journey

From Woodmen-town to the High Pass is a journey of some 180 miles, mostly through relatively friendly and gentle terrain. The baleful influence of Dol Guldur means the Company faces fierce storms and driving rain, but such weather is pleasant compared to the grim terrain of Mirkwood. The companions are followed and harassed by Orcs and Wargs, but these attacks are not a significant danger to such experienced heroes. The Peril Rating of this part of the journey is 2 and the Company faces 1d2 Journey Events. More worrying are rumours of a rider in black, a dark figure that passed through these lands, bringing sorrow and fear with it. It is as though the Messenger of Mordor is circling around the Company, never far away, always both behind and ahead but never in view. Wherever the Messenger goes, it awakens things of evil: cruel men with watchful eyes, hungry beasts and evil spirits.

The companions know they are being watched and followed as they draw closer to the mountains.

The Voice in the Night 5

On the evening before the companions reach the High Pass, a terrible storm blows out of the east. Snow and high winds swirl around the mountains, so wild that even the Eagles could not fly in such a tempest. The companions realise that crossing the High Pass will be a test for even the most seasoned traveller.

That night, the Look-out hears a noise in the darkness, like something sniffing the air. Then a voice whispering into the companion's ear. It is a cold voice, like frost cracking a gravestone, like the death rattle of a sick man, like the winds of winter. Call for a **DC 20 Wisdom** saving throw; if the companion fails, he gains 3 Shadow points.

"Give me the Lamp. Give me the Lamp and I will give you gold."

If the companion hesitates, the Nazgûl makes another offer. He might offer to spare the Look-out's children, return some lost treasure of their people, free a loved one from the dungeons of Dol Guldur or lift some curse.

If the Look-out rejects the offer, then all the sleeping companions have strange, disturbing dreams where similar offers are made to them; they must also all make Corruption checks, as above.

Crossing the Mountains 15

The high pass is choked with ice and snow, meaning it is close to impassable (a Peril Rating of 4 with 1d2 Journey Events), and requiring twelve days to cross. Furthermore, the Nazgûl's proximity makes this a Blighted place (requiring a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw each day to avoid gaining a Shadow point).

Due to the focused nature of this trek, use the following abbreviated Journey Event table:

Journey Event Table

2 (or less): Lost in the Mountains

The Guide must make a **Wisdom** (**Survival**) check. If the hero fails, then roll again on this table and immediately apply it as part of this event.

3 or 4: A Hidden Crevasse

The Scout must make an **Intelligence** (**Investigation**) check. If the hero fails, then the Scout does not notice an icy crevasse that crosses the Company's path. A randomly determined hero (or the hero with the most gear) breaks the ice over the crevasse and falls 30 feet into the depths. Furthermore, the crevasse leads into the Goblin tunnels and they heard the companion come crashing down. They are coming...

5 or 6: No Fire

The Company's supply of fuel is lost, and without a fire they will perish. The Hunter must find a supply of wood to keep them alive. A successful **Wisdom** (**Survival**) check finds a small stand of trees in a sheltered alcove. However, these trees are watched by Orcs.

7 or 8: A Worse Place and A Blacker Danger

As the companions strike camp one cold evening, the clouds part overhead and a thousand thousand points of light hang in the firmament above. It is a night for stories. Each hero must make an **Intelligence** (**History** or **Lore**) check to recall the great deeds of ancient days. On a success, they gain Inspiration, but on a failure they gain 1 Shadow point as the tales turn to darkness and bitter defeats.

9 or 10: Stalking in the Night

The Look-out spots signs of Orcs trying to sneak up on the Company. If the hero fails a **Wisdom** (**Perception**) check, then the Orcs are able to ambush the Company one night (the heroes are Surprised by Great Orcs equal to their number). If the hero succeeds, then the Company may Surprise the orcs instead.

11 or more: Avalanche

The companions hear a loud, inhuman wail echoing up from somewhere far ahead. In response, the mountainside cracks and crumbles, sending tons of snow and rock pouring down towards the companions. Each hero must make a **Strength** (**Athletics**) check. Failing means the companion is swept away in the avalanche, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage.

The Last Foe

On the ninth day, the companions come to the crest of a ridge, and find that they have crossed the spine of the mountains. All of Eriador stretches out below them. Straight ahead, they can see the hills of the Trollshaws and the broken lands of the mountain foothills. To their right lies the snowy expanse of the Coldfells, and below them the sunlight glitters off the winding waters of the Loudwater. Somewhere in that unfamiliar wilderness lies the hidden valley of Rivendell.

As the companions descend the western slopes of the Misty Mountains, they spot a line of footprints in the snow. On closer examination, they are hoof-prints. Most of the trail is obscured by the shifting snows, but there is a clear line of prints ahead of the Company, left by a heavy horse. The Messenger of Mordor crossed the mountains first.

That night, as twilight draws in, the Nazgûl appears out of the darkness. *"Give me the Lamp"*, it hisses, *"or perish"*. It draws its long sword, and the steel of its blade is reflected in hundreds of eyes behind it. A host of Orcs crawled out of some noisome cavern in the foothills of the mountains, and now surround the Company.

There are too many Orcs to defeat. The companions have two options:

- **Unveil the Lamp**, and hope that scouts from Rivendell see the light. The burning Lamp of Balthi blazes with an unearthly radiance, as though a star descended to rest on the mountains. It is visible as far west as Weathertop. All the companions need to do is survive through the night, and the next day they will be met by the sons of Elrond who will escort them to Rivendell.

- **Some flee, others stand and fight**. If some members of the companions remained behind to hold back the Nazgûl, the others could escape down the mountainside to safety.

At Rivendell

Bright Elf-lords escort the Lamp of Balthi and its defenders into the hidden valley of Imladris. There, the companions meet with Elrond Halfelven, who invites them to rest in the Last Homely House. In its fabled Hall of Fire the Lamp of Balthi will hang, until even Rivendell will be no more.

Year's End

Companions in Rivendell may choose the *Open Sanctuary* undertaking.

- Year 2977 -

Events

In Erebor, Balin son of Fundin, one of the twelve companions of Thorin Oakenshield, suggests that the strength of the kingdom is growing, and that in a few years they could turn their gaze west to the halls of Durin. Any Dwarves, or even non-Dwarves of good reputation, might be invited to discuss this plan.

Epilogue: The Passing of the King

In this year, King Bard the Dragonslayer dies in bed, and the crown of Dale passes to his son, Prince Bain. Many gather in Dale, both to celebrate the new king and to discuss recent events in Wilderland.

Thirty years have passed since the Company first met in Wilderland. Thirty times have the black leaves fallen in the wild wood. A lifetime, as the short-lived Northmen reckon time; a brief spell for the immortal Elves.

This final year is an opportunity for the surviving companions, if any, to reflect on their deeds and even lay down their burdens. Characters who helped Prince Bain in earlier adventures can retire to the safety of Dale. Others may prefer to continue adventuring outside Mirkwood.

The forest itself lies under a dark shadow. The Woodmen, if they still endure, are few in number. Radagast remains in his cottage at Rhosgobel, where he has lived for many years, but his absences grow longer and longer as he wanders the forest. Some rumours claim he goes to visit the River-maidens, other stories say he travels through the wood in the shape of a bird or a fox.

In the south, the Messenger of Mordor leaves Dol Guldur. The Ringwraith is recalled to Barad-Dûr, to report to Sauron. What tidings does he bring the Dark Lord on his Dark Throne? Does the Nazgûl tell that the north is weak and divided, or does he speak of heroes that drove back the Shadow from the wood?

THE NAZGÛL OF - DOL GULDUR -

Nine (rings) he gave to Mortal Men, proud and great, and so ensnared them. Long ago they fell under the dominion of the One, and they became Ringwraiths, shadows under his great Shadow, his most terrible servants.

The evil spirits sent by Sauron to reclaim Dol Guldur are three of the Nine Nazgûl, the apple of the Great Eye. The chief among them is the Black Easterling, second in command only after the Lord of Morgul himself, the Witch-king of Angmar.

When the Ringwraiths return to Mirkwood in 2951, Sauron has just entered his fastness in Mordor and is still far from reclaiming his ancient power. As their fate is inextricably linked to that of their Master, the Nazgûl of Dol Guldur are yet but a dark reflection of what the Nine will become in sixty years time, when the Lord of the Rings will unleash them and their Black Captain to hunt for the One Ring.

In gaming terms, this lesser stature is reflected in the three Nazgûl's statistics; the power of the Ringwraiths will progressively become higher as the Shadow grows, in anticipation of the War of the Ring. Future supplements will track the growing power of the Enemy.

DARK UNDEAD OR UNCLAD AND INVISIBLE

The Nazgûl wear robes or suits of armour to assume a shape when they must have dealings with the living. But even when given a physical shape they cannot be easily destroyed, for the power of their Master is in them as long as the Ruling Ring endures. Use the Nazgûl's entry as Dark Undead when it confronts the heroes in physical form.

However, the Ringwraiths may choose to appear as incorporeal ghosts. In this form few weapons in Middle-earth can assault them, and even the Elves perceive them only as dark shadows upon the world. Use the Nazgûl's stats for Unclad and Invisible when they are spirits of creeping horror and dread.

The Black Shadow

A victim of the Black Shadow remains Unconscious for a number of days equal to his Shadow score. For each day spent in this state, the hero must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw (this is reduced to DC 10 if tended to by someone familiar with *The Weapons of the Enemy* (see the *Player's Guide*, page 68). Each failed saving throw adds 1 Shadow point to the hero, but does not extend the time spent Unconscious.

While the hero is Unconscious, if his Shadow score ever exceeds his Wisdom score then the character slips into even deeper dreams and then dies.

If the hero resists for the length of the malady, he finally overcomes his sickness and wakes up (but maintains his new Shadow score).

The Shadow of Fear

The Ringwraith can terrorise mortals into doing their dark bidding. When a companion fails their saving throw against this ability, the Nazgûl can compel the hero to carry out some service (such as reporting information to the Ringwraith) or to perform a secret task. The compulsion lasts a number of weeks equal to the hero's current Shadow score. A spellbound hero is loathe to perform the compelled action and is often nervous, moody or morose. Other members of the Company who note the change in their Companion can make a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) or Wisdom (Insight) check to provoke the hero (those with *Dark Knowledge* make this check with Advantage). A successful check allows the target to make another saving throw against the spell, ending its effects on a success.

THE LIEUTENANT OF DOL GULDUR

Chief of the three Wraiths of the forest, the Lieutenant remains Unclad and Invisible while in Dol Guldur, speaking from the shadows as the Necromancer did. When he must go abroad as a Dark Undead he is clad as a tall Easterling warrior wearing a black suit of armour, his invisible face concealed behind a heavy mask.

THE LIEUTENANT OF DOL GULDUR AS DARK UNDEAD

Medium Undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)

Armour Class 17 (Black Easterling Armour)
Hit Points 136 (16d8+64)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Resistances non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing; cold, psychic
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Paralysed, Petrified, Stunned
Skills Intimidation +8, Perception +4
Senses Truesight 30 ft (otherwise blind), passive Perception 14
Languages Easterling, Black Speech, Orcish, Westron
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Deadly Voice. The Ringwraiths scream at their enemies with long-drawn wails that rise to a deafeningly high piercing note. The Lieutenant can use his bonus action to make a Frightened creature become Stunned until the end of his next turn.

Fear of Fire. If a torch or other flame comes within 10 feet of him, the Ringwraith suffers Disadvantage on his attack rolls.

Gathering Shadows. If the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur is accompanied by either The Messenger of Mordor or The Ghost of the Forest, then the **DC** for saving throws against his abilities are raised by 1. If both accompany him, the **DC** is raised by 2.

Legendary. The Lieutenant can take one Legendary action each turn to use either his **Black Breath, Claw** or **Thing of Terror** abilities.

Savage Assault. When the Lieutenant rolls a natural 18 or 19, he may, as a bonus action, make a single additional melee attack against the same opponent.

Actions

Multiattack. The Lieutenant makes one attack with his Black Sword and one with his Claw.

Black Sword of Mordor. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) magical slashing damage. The Lieutenant can use his bonus action to add 5 (1d6+2) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage.

Black Breath. *(see entry for The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, Unclad and Invisible)*

Shadow of Fear. *(see entry for The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, Unclad and Invisible)*

Thing of Terror. *(see entry for The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, Unclad and Invisible)*

Reactions

Dwimmerlaik. If a hero strikes the Ringwraith with a critical hit, he may use his reaction to invoke this ability. The hero must make a **DC 16 Strength** saving throw. On a failure, the hero's weapon shatters, and the hero receives the damage instead of the Ringwraith. Legendary weapons might not be destroyed, but are lost as a cold pain shoots through the hero's body and she drops the weapon.

THE LIEUTENANT OF DOL GULDUR, UNCLAD AND INVISIBLE

Medium Undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)

Armour Class 10
Hit Points 136 (16d8+64)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Immunities non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing; cold, psychic
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Paralysed, Petrified, Stunned
Skills Intimidation +8, Perception +4
Senses Truesight 30 ft (otherwise blind), passive Perception 14
Languages Easterling, Black Speech, Orcish, Westron
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Gathering Shadows. If the Lieutenant of Dol Guldur is accompanied by either The Messenger of Mordor or The Ghost of the Forest, then the **DC** for saving throws against his abilities are raised by 1. If both accompany him, the **DC** is raised by 2.

Legendary. The Lieutenant can take one Legendary action each turn to use either his **Black Breath** or **Thing of Terror** abilities.

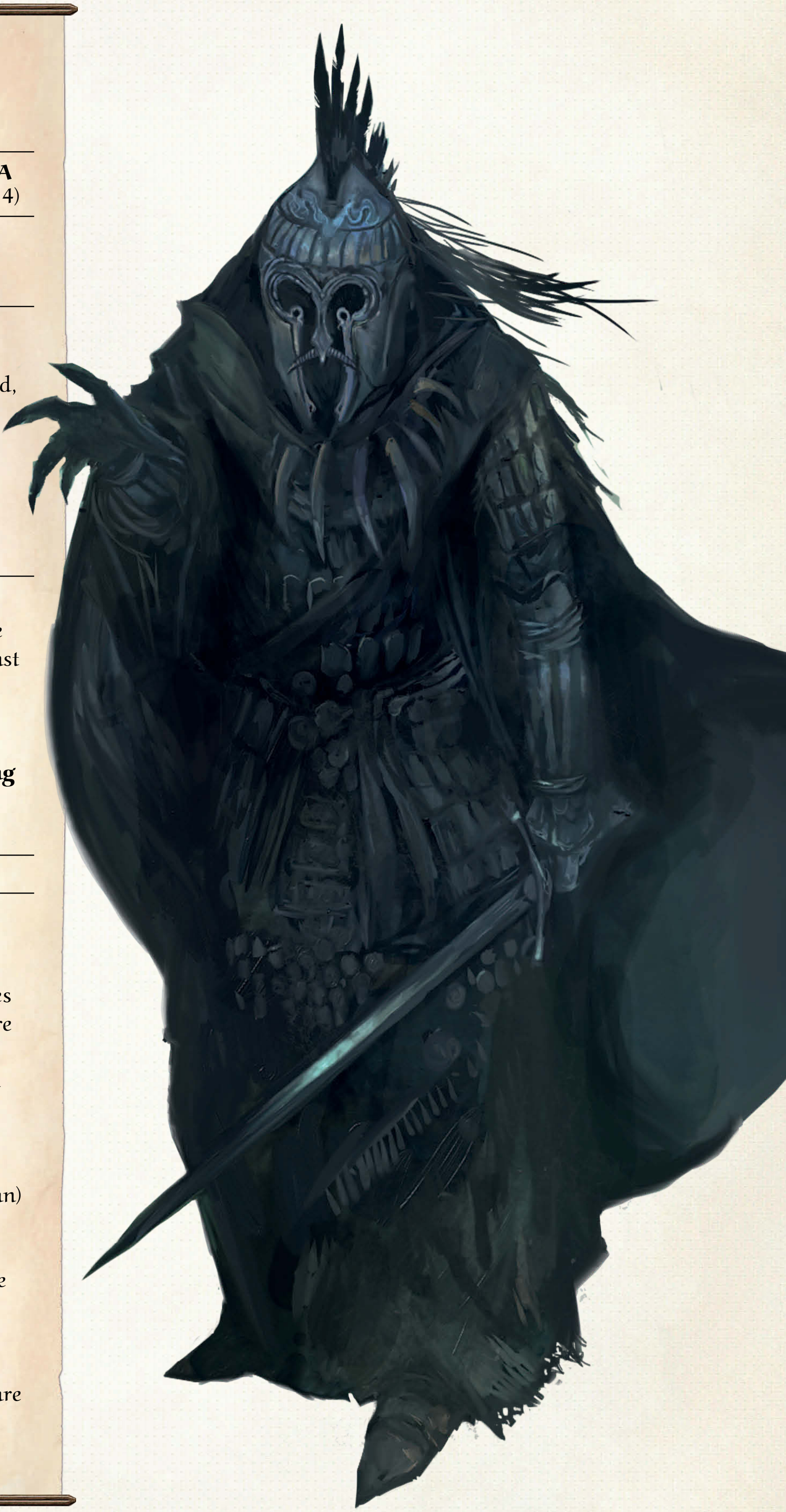
Thing of Shadow. The Ringwraith is Invisible.

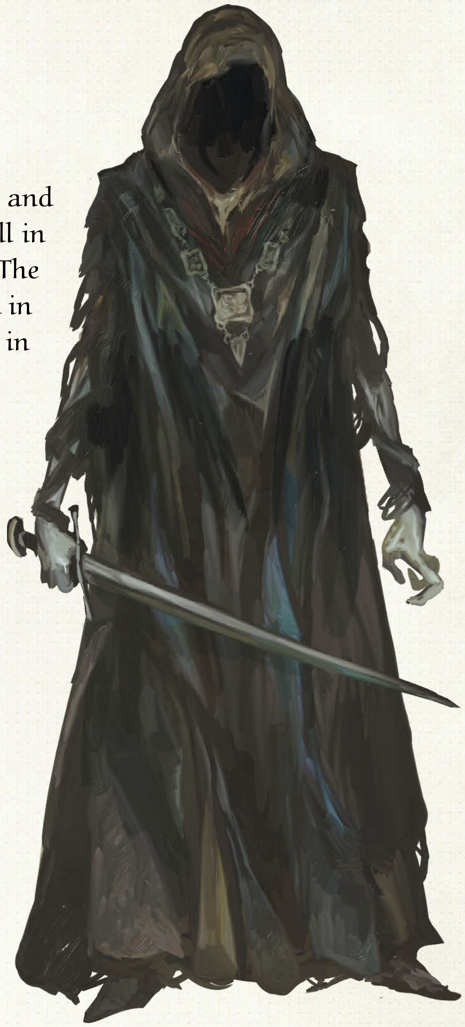
Actions

Black Breath. The Ringwraith can use its action to target a creature within 10 feet. That creature must make a **DC 16 Constitution** saving throw. On a failure, the creature gains 1 Shadow point and becomes Unconscious. They may be revived as an action, but are Miserable until they take a long rest. On a success, the creature gains 1 Shadow point but remains awake. If a Ringwraith targets an Unconscious creature then they are subject to *The Black Shadow* (see page 127).

Shadow of Fear. The Ringwraith can direct its terrible will upon any Frightened mortal (Dwarf, Hobbit or Man) such that the victim becomes an agent for the Enemy. The Ringwraith may use its action to force the target to make a **DC 16 Wisdom** saving throw. On a failure, see *The Shadow of Fear* (page 128).

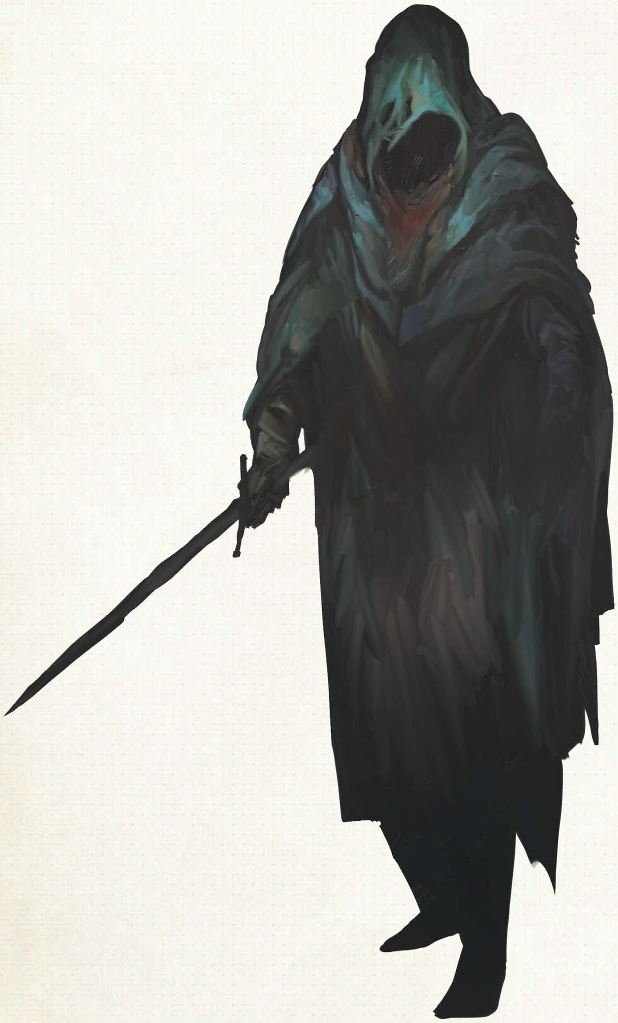
Thing of Terror. The Ringwraith can use his action to cause any number of targets within 60 feet of him to make a **DC 16 Wisdom** saving throw. Those that fail are Frightened until the end of the Ringwraith's next turn.





The Ghost of the Forest

The Ghost of the Forest roams Mirkwood Unclad and Invisible, and can only be discerned as a rustling in the leaves, a sudden chill in the air, and an unreasoning terror that strikes the very soul. The rare times he is seen as Dark Undead, he is hooded and cloaked in voluminous robes, a raiment similar to the Wise though ebony in colour.



The Messenger of Mordor

The chief messenger of Sauron has been given a swift black horse and raiment to hide his Dark Undead features, so that he may present himself at the gates of Men, Elves or Dwarves to carry his Lord's will.

The Ghost of the Forest as Dark Undead

Medium Undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Armour Class 15
Hit Points 91 (14d8+28)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Resistances non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing; cold, psychic
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Paralysed, Petrified, Stunned
Skills Investigation +4, Perception +4
Senses Truesight 30 ft (otherwise blind), passive Perception 14
Languages Black Speech, Orcish, Westron
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Deadly Voice. The Ringwraiths scream at their enemies with long-drawn wails that rise to a deafeningly high piercing note. The Ghost can use his bonus action to make a Frightened creature become Stunned until the end of his next turn.

Fear of Fire. If a torch or other flame comes within 10 feet of him, the Ringwraith suffers Disadvantage on his attack rolls.

Fell Speed. The Ghost may take a bonus action to Disengage from one opponent and engage another without provoking an opportunity attack. The new opponent must be within his movement range.

Gathering Shadows. If the Ghost is accompanied by either The Messenger of Mordor or The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, then the **DC** for saving throws against his abilities are raised by 1. If both accompany him, the **DC** is raised by 2.

Actions

Multiattack. The Ghost makes one attack with his longsword and one with his claw.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage or 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage if wielded with both hands.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Black Breath. *(see entry for The Ghost of the Forest, Unclad and Invisible)*

Shadow of Fear. *(see entry for The Ghost of the Forest, Unclad and Invisible)*

Thing of Terror. *(see entry for The Ghost of the Forest, Unclad and Invisible)*

Reactions

Dwimmerlaik. If a hero strikes the Ringwraith with a critical hit, he may use his reaction to invoke this ability. The hero must make a **DC 14 Strength** saving throw. On a failure, the hero's weapon shatters, and the hero receives the damage instead of the Ringwraith. Legendary weapons might not be destroyed, but are lost as a cold pain shoots through the hero's body and she drops the weapon.

The Ghost of the Forest, Unclad and Invisible

Medium Undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Armour Class 15
Hit Points 91 (14d8+28)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Immunities non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing; cold, psychic
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Paralysed, Petrified, Stunned
Skills Investigation +4, Perception +4
Senses Truesight 30 ft (otherwise blind), passive Perception 14
Languages Black Speech, Orcish, Westron
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Gathering Shadows. If the Ghost is accompanied by either The Messenger of Mordor or The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, then the **DC** for saving throws against his abilities are raised by 1. If both accompany him, the **DC** is raised by 2.

Thing of Shadow. The Ringwraith is Invisible.

Actions

Black Breath. The Ringwraith can use its action to target a creature within 10 feet. That creature must make a **DC 14 Constitution** saving throw. On a failure, the creature gains 1 Shadow point and becomes Unconscious. They may be revived as an action, but are Miserable until they take a long rest. On a success, the creature gains 1 Shadow point but remains awake. If a ringwraith targets an Unconscious creature then they are subject to *The Black Shadow* (see page 127).

Shadow of Fear. The Ghost can direct its terrible will upon any Frightened mortal (Dwarf, Hobbit or Man) such that the victim becomes an agent for the Enemy. The Ringwraith may use its action to force the target to make a **DC 14 Wisdom** saving throw. On a failure, see *The Shadow of Fear* (page 128).

Thing of Terror (1/day). The Ringwraith can use his action to cause any number of targets within 60 feet of him to make a **DC 14 Wisdom** saving throw. Those that fail are Frightened until the end of the Ringwraith's next turn.

The Messenger of Mordor as Dark Undead

Medium Undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+0)	17 (+3)

Armour Class 15 (Scale hauberk)
Hit Points 105 (14d8+42)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Resistances non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing; cold, psychic
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Paralysed, Petrified, Stunned
Skills Intimidation +6, Persuasion +6, Riddle +3, Traditions +3
Senses Truesight 30 ft (otherwise blind), passive Perception 11
Languages Adûnaic, Sindarin, Black Speech, Orcish, Westron
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Deadly Voice. The Ringwraiths scream at their enemies with long-drawn wails that rise to a deafeningly high piercing note. The Messenger can use his bonus action to make a Frightened creature become Stunned until the end of this next turn.

Fear of Fire. If a torch or other flame comes within 10 feet of him, the Messenger suffers Disadvantage on his attack rolls.

Gathering Shadows. If the Messenger is accompanied by either The Ghost of the Forest or The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, then the **DC** for saving throws against his abilities are raised by 1. If both accompany him, the **DC** is raised by 2.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) slashing damage or 6 (1d10+1) slashing damage if wielded with both hands.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) slashing damage.

Bewilder. The Messenger can briefly exert his will to dominate others. All creatures within 30 feet of the Messenger must make a **DC 14 Wisdom** saving throw or be Stunned for 1d4+1 rounds. As long as the effect lasts, the Messenger may then make a melee attack against a Stunned creature as a bonus action. The Messenger can only use this ability once per long rest.

Black Breath. *(see entry for The Messenger of Mordor, Unclad and Invisible)*

Shadow of Fear. *(see entry for The Messenger of Mordor, Unclad and Invisible)*

Thing of Terror. *(see entry for The Messenger of Mordor, Unclad and Invisible)*

Reactions

Dwimmerlaik. If a hero strikes the Ringwraith with a critical hit, he may use his reaction to invoke this ability. The hero must make a **DC 14 Strength** saving throw. On a failure, the hero's weapon shatters, and the hero receives the damage instead of the Ringwraith. Legendary weapons might not be destroyed, but are lost as a cold pain shoots through the hero's body and she drops the weapon.

The Messenger of Mordor, Unclad and Invisible

Medium Undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Armour Class 11
Hit Points 105 (14d8+42)
Speed 30 ft

Damage Immunities non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing; cold, psychic
Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Paralysed, Petrified, Stunned
Skills Intimidation +5, Persuasion +5, Riddle +3, Traditions +3
Senses Truesight 30 ft (otherwise blind), passive Perception 11
Languages Adûnaic, Sindarin, Black Speech, Orcish, Westron
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Gathering Shadows. If the Messenger is accompanied by either The Ghost of the Forest or The Lieutenant of Dol Guldur, then the **DC** for saving throws against his abilities are raised by 1. If both accompany him, the **DC** is raised by 2.

Thing of Shadow. The Ringwraith is Invisible.

Actions

Black Breath. The Ringwraith can use its action to target a creature within 10 feet. That creature must make a **DC 14 Constitution** saving throw. On a failure, the creature gains 1 Shadow point and becomes Unconscious (they may be revived by an action, but are Miserable until they take a long rest). On a success, the creature gains 1 Shadow point but remains awake. If a Ringwraith targets an Unconscious creature then they are subject to *The Black Shadow* (see page 127).

Shadow of Fear. The Ringwraith can direct its terrible will upon any Frightened mortal (Dwarf, Hobbit or Man) such that the victim becomes an agent for the Enemy. The Ringwraith may use its action to force the target to make a **DC 14 Wisdom** saving throw. On a failure, see *The Shadow of Fear* (page 128).

Thing of Terror. The Ringwraith can use his action to cause any number of targets within 60 feet of him to make a **DC 14 Wisdom** saving throw. Those that fail are Frightened until the end of the Ringwraith's next turn.

shadows in - the forest -

The sun was shining brilliantly, and it was a long while before he could bear it. When he could, he saw all round him a sea of dark green, ruffled here and there by the breeze; and there were everywhere hundreds of butterflies.

The gloom of Mirkwood hides not only great evil, but also sometimes great beauty. The forest is alive; eerie and strange... it seems to know its visitors and can both torment and delight them. The secret fears and cares that travellers always carry with them can manifest within the forest. The following Journey Event tables offer optional rules that integrate the basic events with the various backgrounds of the heroes. Not every Journey Event should feature a companion's backstory, but such scenes can have a powerful impact if judiciously applied. While this table uses the Greatest Forest as its setting, there are many other places in Middle-earth that warrant such an approach.

The following tables provide several examples customised for specific backgrounds. Loremasters can focus on the active hero if a journey role is highlighted, or nominate another hero, allowing others to have the spotlight.

The selected hero receives Inspiration for invoking their background and then the Loremaster presents a situation that draws on the rules presented here. Note that many of these examples can be cast into other backgrounds with only small changes.

Journey Event Table Entry 1 (or less)

A Chance Encounter

The Company meets a fellow traveller or group of travellers. The Scout must make a **Dexterity (Stealth)** check to avoid them, or any hero may make a **Charisma (Persuasion)** check to interact with them. If the interaction is successful, the first roll of the next event is made with Advantage. Failure results in Disadvantage.

Changeling

The fellow travellers might be associated with the Woodland Realm in some way and are perhaps known to you from your time there. Or they might hail from the Dalelands and something about one of them... a voice or manner of movement calls to you with the echoes of your earliest memories. You may spend Inspiration to use **Lore** (instead of **Perception**) if you wish to spend time with the travellers considering where and when you may have seen them before.

Emissary of your People

The traveller bears the same sigil that you do. Do they truly serve the same lord? Or did they somehow acquire the symbol by accident or mischief? Perhaps you should speak to them privately, away from the rest of the Company... You may spend Inspiration to use **Traditions** in place of **Perception** to ask questions of the travellers that only those of your homeland could answer correctly.

Loyal Servant

The other travellers are agents or servants of one of your master's rivals. It is possible that they may recognise you (or your master, if present)... will they simply rebuke you? Attack you? Perhaps they will try to recruit you or interrogate you on behalf of their master. You may use **Intelligence (Riddle)** in place of the **Persuasion** check if you choose to have words with the travellers.

World Weary

The traveller is someone known to you long ago. They will instantly know you, but what do they think of you? Did you leave them on good terms? Or is this the reigniting of an ancient rivalry? Did you promise to return, only to find that your feet always carried you to other places? If things go ill with your old friend, you may elect to spend Inspiration and use **Deception** in order to spin some comfortable story. Whether it has a kernel of truth or is composed of only lies is up to you to decide. Remember that you gain 2 Shadow points if you lie.

JOURNEY EVENT TABLE ENTRY 2

Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit

The Hunter has an opportunity to gather supplies. They must make a **Wisdom (Survival)** check. You have Advantage if the Company won *Feasts Fit for the Kings of Ancient Times,* or Disadvantage if they face *Meagre Supplies and Poor Meals*. If successful, you either gather food (restore a level of Exhaustion or 1 Hit Die to each hero) or collect herbs (Loremaster's choice of herbs found). If you fail then the Arrival roll gains a -1 penalty.

Doomed to Die

The death of your quarry at the end of your weapon or after being ripped from the warm earth by your own hands has made you melancholy and reminded you that one day it will be your fate to die, perhaps in a similar way. You may choose to automatically succeed at the required **Survival** check by spending Inspiration and gaining 1 Shadow point.

The Harrowed

Something in the hunt has reminded you of your ever-present dreams. It seems that your fate is inescapable and that every moment of your life is but a tally mark in someone else's ledger. Will you allow despair to grip you or will you continue to strive uselessly against what must happen? You may choose to automatically succeed at the required **Survival** check by spending Inspiration and gaining 1 Shadow point.

Lure of the Road

Whilst seeking for food, you chanced to spy some new path amidst the trees or other point of interest in the distance. If you were by yourself, you could pursue this new avenue without hesitation but instead you are bound to the Company and their path leads a different way... You can choose to return empty-handed from the hunt, or you can gain Advantage on the **Survival** check by turning aside from the new trail and focusing on your task. If you do so, gain 1 point of Shadow.

Reluctant Adventurer

You never wanted to go out into the Wild, but one has to admit that the sight of a crackling fire and the smell of a freshly caught meal cooking above it whilst your friends huddle round is worth some discomfort. You can spend Inspiration in order to use **Nature** or **Perception** in place of the **Survival** check.

JOURNEY EVENT TABLE ENTRY 3

An Obstacle

Something blocks the path ahead. The Guide must make a **Wisdom (Survival)** check and each other companion must make either **Wisdom (Survival)** or **Strength (Athletics)**. If the Company has horses or ponies, one hero must make a **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check. All checks have Advantage if they are on *Paths both Swift and True*, or Disadvantage if they face *The Wearisome Toil of Many Leagues*. If all are successful, the Arrival roll gains +1. If half or more are successful, there is no penalty. If more than half failed then each hero gains a level of Exhaustion. If all fail add a -1 penalty to the Arrival roll to the Exhaustion.

Driven from Home

Though you are far from home, there is something familiar about this challenge. Perhaps it reminds you of your youth or you possess knowledge that will allow you to bypass the obstacle. You may choose to automatically succeed at the required check by spending Inspiration and gaining 1 Shadow point.

Hunted by the Shadow

There is more here than it first appears. A dread foreboding comes over you; you are certain that the Enemy has caused this delay or that the Mirkwood itself is setting a trap for you. If you pass your check, then you have somehow avoided the greater danger but it has darkened your heart... make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or gain 1 Shadow point. If you failed, then some greater danger approaches... *(The Loremaster may wish to roll again on the Journey Events table or have an appropriate enemy force be spotted in the distance.)*

The Magician

Perhaps this obstacle is the ruined reminder of a secretive people lost to history or it is of natural origin but of unusual properties all the same. In any case, you know some hidden thing about the challenge and might share it with the Company. You can spend Inspiration in order to use **History**, **Lore** or **Riddle** instead of the other skills.

Seeker of the Lost

Whatever blocks the Company's way is not just a simple obstacle, but a clue to whatever you seek. If only you had time to study what you have just found, it might aid you on your quest... If the Company does not agree to camp here, then you gain 1 point of Shadow. If they do, you have Advantage on your next **Intelligence** check.

Journey Event Table Entry 4

In Need of Help

The Company meets someone who needs aid. If they choose not to assist each hero must make a Wisdom saving throw to avoid 1 Shadow Point. If they do help, they make three checks, usually from **Animal Handling, Insight, Medicine, Nature, Persuasion, Survival** or **Traditions**. If all checks are successful then all heroes gain Inspiration and +1 to the Arrival Roll. If two checks are successful then one hero gains Inspiration and +1 to the Arrival Roll. If one check is successful then +1 to Arrival Roll. If all rolls fail then a -1 modifier is applied to the Arrival Roll.

Emissary of your People

Whomever needs help is from your homeland, or is closely allied to your people. You will feel an obligation to help them and become distraught if you cannot. If the Company presses on, you automatically fail your **Wisdom** saving throw. If you try to assist and fail, you gain 1 Shadow point in addition to any other consequences.

The Harrowed

You have seen this situation before, in your most terrible dreams. You are certain that this situation is beyond aid and these folk are doomed despite your best efforts. Regardless of whether or not the Company elects to aid the unfortunates, you automatically gain a Shadow point (meaning you automatically fail the **Wisdom** saving throw if you are called to make it).

Loyal Servant

These folks know your master, are on the road to see her, or will somehow convey word of your good deeds to your master. If your master is with you, they will report on your deeds to your master before the Company takes its leave. If the Company elects to help the group then you may spend Inspiration to grant Advantage on all three of the required checks.

Oathsworn

Some aspect of these people's plight invokes your Oath. You find it nearly impossible to refuse to aid them, and will take it hard if you do not personally succeed at your efforts. If the Company avoids responsibility and you fail the **Wisdom** saving throw, you gain 2 Shadow points. If the Company assists and you fail your check (or do not make one) then you gain 1 Shadow point.

Journey Event Table Entry 5

Agents of the Enemy

The Company approaches a hostile force. The Look-out must make a **Wisdom (Perception)** check to spot the enemy early. The Look-out has Advantage if the Company is *Hidden from the Shadow* or Disadvantage if they face *The Keen Eyes of the Enemy*. These modifiers apply to any rolls made outside of combat. If successful, they may either sneak away or ambush them (in which case the enemy is Surprised). If failed, the enemy sets an ambush and the Player-heroes are Surprised.

Doomed to Die

This is it! You have long believed that you would fall in combat, taking many of the enemy before you yourself succumbed to their wicked blades. Forth into battle and glory! *(And, if you survive, perhaps you were wrong today. But there might come a day when your death is on the battlefield.)* If the enemy sets an ambush, then you may spend Inspiration to avoid being Surprised yourself.

Fallen Scion

The enemies that approach have something to do with your denied heritage. Perhaps they have been recruited by those who wish for your line to die with you and the sooner the better. Or they might even be part of the force that is responsible for your current circumstances. If you elect to flee from a chance to earn revenge against those who wronged you, you automatically gain 1 Shadow point.

Hunted by the Shadow

The enemy force is somehow connected to you... they are either looking for you directly or you have had interactions with one or more of their members in the past. You may elect to recall those grim memories to aid you in your current struggle. If you spend Inspiration and take 1 Shadow point then you have Advantage on all attribute checks, attack rolls and saving throws in the first round of combat.

The Magician

The group ahead may be adversaries, but it's possible that they are not true servants of the Enemy. They have something that you want, or something that would benefit the whole Company.If you stand firm, neither fleeing nor making ready to ambush your foes, you may spend Inspiration to make a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)** check as they approach. On a success, you have temporarily forestalled hostilities and might be able to make an amicable trade with the foes.

JOURNEY EVENT TABLE ENTRY 6

The Wonders of Middle-earth

The Company is presented with a spectacular sight. Each hero must make either a **Wisdom** check or an **Intelligence (Investigation)** check. These checks are made with Advantage in *Fair Weather* and Disadvantage under *Foul Weather*. If successful, the hero recovers one level of Exhaustion or gains one if they fail. If all heroes succeed, gain a +1 to the Arrival Roll or if all fail then the Arrival Roll gains a -1 penalty.

Driven from Home

There is some aspect of the scenery that reminds you of home and brings forth happy memories. You study the wonder for some time before continuing on your journey. If you are proficient in **Perception**, you may spend Inspiration to allow the other heroes to add your Proficiency Bonus to their rolls. As long as one of the Company succeeds at the check, you gain Inspiration.

Lure of the Road

Such vistas are the reason why you find it difficult to remain in one place. There is always something new… profound and moving experiences might be around any bend of the Road and you intend to show them to your friends! If you are proficient in **Survival**, you may spend Inspiration to allow the other heroes to add your Proficiency Bonus to their rolls. As long as one of the Company succeeds at the check, you gain Inspiration.

Reluctant Adventurer

Whatever beautiful thing that is in front of you can not be seen from your front door. Thus travelling cannot be all bad, if it allows you to see such things. But then again, amazing scenery might hide difficult going… You can spend Inspiration and choose to fail your check in order to give each other member of the Company Inspiration.

World Weary

The vista before you is simply a reminder of all that you are leaving behind and how much you have lost in the years that are now but a memory. And memories fade over time… You may spend Inspiration to succeed at your check, as if you rolled exactly what was needed for a success. You gain 1 Shadow point as well.

JOURNEY EVENT TABLE ENTRY 7

A Hunt

The Hunter has a particularly excellent chance to catch a good meal. The Hunter must make a **Wisdom (Survival)** check. These checks are made with Advantage with *Feasts Fit for the Kings of Ancient Times*, and Disadvantage if the Company has *Meagre Supplies and Poor Meals*. If successful by 5 or more, all heroes recover a level of Exhaustion and the Company gains +1 to the Arrival Roll. Other successes recover a level of Exhaustion only. If the check fails then the Company gains a level of Exhaustion. If the Hunter fails by 5 or more add a -1 penalty to the Arrival Roll.

Doomed to Die

There is a chance that your doom does not lie on a battlefield, but alone in the wild as you seek a creature and perhaps become prey to some other hunter yourself. There is always danger in the Wild. If you spend Inspiration and take on a level of Exhaustion you can automatically succeed at your check, as if you rolled exactly what you needed to succeed.

Oathsworn

Some aspect or circumstance related to the hunt is related to your Oath. It might be a chance to take a step towards fulfilling your oath, but you will have to set aside the needs of the Company in order to do so. You may choose to take Disadvantage on your **Survival** check. If you do, any success is counted as if you succeeded by 5 or more.

Seeker of the Lost

While you are on the hunt, you happen upon some token related to what you seek. It is not the thing itself, but some signifier that new knowledge could be gained about what you seek, if you but spent time in study. Make a **Intelligence (Investigation)** check. If you fail, you spend too much time on the clue and automatically fail the **Survival** check as well (as if you had rolled just below what you needed to succeed).

World Weary

The quarry you pursue is known to you… you've hunted its kind (or perhaps even it itself) before. Thus, the hunt is easy for you and the only trouble is the memories that it brings back… If you spend Inspiration, you automatically succeed at the check as if you had rolled exactly you needed. You also gain 1 Shadow point.

Journey Event Table Entry 8

A Fine Spot for a Camp

The Scout has spotted a location that make make an excellent campsite. Make an **Intelligence** (**Investigation**) check. If the check succeeds by 5 or more then the Company recovers a level of Exhaustion and gains +1 to the Arrival Roll. On a basic success the Company recovers a level of Exhaustion. On a failure the Company gains a level of Exhaustion. On a failure of 5 or more the Company is in danger and might face enemies. They also gain Exhaustion and a -1 penalty to the Arrival Roll.

Changeling

You have been here before, or at least the songs of your Elven foster-parents were so vivid that it seems like you were here. This place is familiar to you in a way that you cannot explain. Before making your **Investigation** check, you can spend Inspiration. If you do so, you automatically succeed at the check, as if you rolled exactly what was needed to pass.

The Harrowed

Somehow the campsite you selected is especially relevant to your dreams. You toss and turn all night, caught in new experiences that, upon awaking, you struggle to convey to your companions. You may choose to take Disadvantage on your **Investigation** check. If you do, any success is counted as if you succeeded by 5 or more.

Hunted by the Shadow

This campsite is known to your pursuers, and they might return soon. Or, perhaps, they left some token behind and you might learn something from careful consideration of the item. You may choose to make the **Investigation** check with Disadvantage. If you do so, any success counts as if you succeeded by 5 or more.

Loyal Servant

If your master is with you, then not only do you need to scout for a campsite, but you will have many duties once it is located to make it suitable. Even if your master is elsewhere, you have tasks to complete for them... note-taking and preparations for your eventual reunion. You may spend Inspiration and gain a level of Exhaustion. You are then considered to have succeeded at locating a campsite, as if you had rolled exactly what you needed for a basic success.

Journey Event Table Entry 9

A Lingering Memory of Times Long Past

The Company discovers a relic of past ages. Each companion must make a **Wisdom** check. If successful, the hero gains Inspiration. If you succeed by 5 or more, you may remove a level of Exhaustion. If the hero fails, you must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw or gain 2 points of Shadow. If you fail the initial check by 5 or more, you must make the saving throw and gain a level of Exhaustion. If at least half the Company succeed at the check, add +1 to the Arrival Roll. Otherwise apply a -1 modifier instead.

Doomed to Die

The ancient artefact is a signifier of ancient heroes who stood against darkness, knowing that with their own doom the safety of their friends and families could be bought. You can spend Inspiration to use **Intelligence** (**History** or **Lore**) in place of the **Wisdom** check, applied the effects listed above on a success or failure.

The Magician

So much wisdom of the ages has been lost in the uncounted years since the world was made. This discovery is the smallest echo of that knowledge, but it is still worth examining. You may choose to voluntarily fail the **Wisdom** check (as if you had rolled just below what was needed). You automatically gain 1 point of Shadow (you do not need to make a saving throw) but every other member of the Company gains Advantage on their checks.

Oathsworn

Whatever you have found is a reminder of the power inherent in bonded words — perhaps these are the ruins of a once prosperous people who betrayed their oath and fell, or it is a personal effect of some hero of ancient days who gave everything to fulfill her promise. You may spend Inspiration to succeed at the **Wisdom** check, as if you rolled exactly what was needed for a basic success. You gain 1 Shadow point as well.

Seeker of the Lost

You have found something that no one would have possibly imagined could have been recovered — it's inconceivable that the relic still exists! But it's not at all what you are looking for. Will this cause you to despair or will it make you redouble your efforts? You may choose to make the **Wisdom** check at Disadvantage. Any success counts as if you had succeeded by 5 or more on the check.

Journey Event Table Entry 10

A Place Touched by Shadow

The essence of something dark and terrible lingers here. The Scout must make an **Intelligence (Investigation)** check to avoid the area. If successful, the Company gains a +1 to their Arrival Roll. If the Scout succeeds by 5 or more, each hero gains Inspiration and may remove 1 temporary Shadow point. If the Scout fails, each hero must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption or gain 1 point of Shadow. If the Scout fails by 5 or more, some dark think still lurks here, ancient and evil...

Driven from Home

This place was once the home of somebody or something. Perhaps the Shadow came here, bringing death and destruction. Or perhaps the Company are the trespassers and if they would leave the poor thing that slumbers here along then they would not stir up any more trouble... You can choose to spend Inspiration and gain 1 Shadow point to succeed on the **Investigation** check, as if you rolled exactly what you needed.

Fallen Scion

There is something here, some item or piece of information that would help you restore your lost position. But standing here at the edge won't allow you to find it; you must venture further into this dread place... You may choose to voluntarily fail the **Investigation** check (as if you had rolled just below what was needed). You automatically gain 1 point of Shadow (you do not need to make a saving throw) but each other member of the Company gains Advantage on their saving throws.

The Harrowed

This is a strange place. Very strange. And then it hits you... it is a place that you have never seen in your dreams. Your dreams are your constant companion, and they are full of doom and despair. Why was a dread place such as this absent from them? You may choose to make the **Investigation** check at Disadvantage. Any success counts as if you had succeeded by 5 or more on the check.

Lure of the Road

You have been here before, in your journeys of long ago. You knew this place before it fell to the Enemy, before it was touched by the Shadow. Your memories of the past haunt you as you stare at the destruction... You may choose to spend Inspiration and gain 1 point of Shadow. If you do so, you succeed at the **Investigation** check, as if you rolled exactly what was needed.

Journey Event Table Entry 11

The Enemy is Abroad

Evil Men, Orcs, Goblins or other servants of the Enemy are moving through the area. If the Company is subject to *The Keen Eyes of the Enemy*, the confrontation is unavoidable, if the Look-out makes a **Wisdom (Perception)** check, the enemy is Surprised on the first round of combat. If the Company is *Hidden from the Shadow*, the Look-out can use **Perception** or **Stealth** to avoid the enemy. If the check fails, the enemy is still Surprised on the first round of combat. If neither applies, then each member of the Company must make a **Dexterity (Stealth)** check. If the Company has horses or ponies then one companion must make a **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check as well. If any of these rolls fails, they have been spotted and battle is engaged with no advantage to either side.

Emissary

The enemies that you face might be willing to let you pass, if you can convince them that they have more to gain from not fighting the Company. You may elect to allow the foes to approach, without any attempt to sneak away or ambush them. You gain 1 Shadow point. Before initiative is rolled, you may make a **Intimidation** or **Persuasion** check with Disadvantage. If you succeed, the enemy does not attack you and you gain another point of Shadow. If you fail the check, combat begins and the heroes are Surprised in the first round.

Hunted by the Shadow

Are these foes who search for you by name? Or is just ill-fortune that brings them here? If you elect that the enemy is looking for you, spend Inspiration: one of the enemy gains the **Hatred** special ability (see page 117 of the *Loremaster's Guide*), with you as the target. You have Advantage on all attribute checks, attack rolls and saving throws in the first round.

The Magician

Not every concoction calls for the eye of a newt or frog's toes. Some call for the sting of an Attercop, the tongue of an Ancient Basilisk or dried Gallows-weed. Fighting the enemy may be profitable for you. You may choose to have the company make their **Dexterity (Stealth)** checks with Advantage, in order to set an ambush. If successful, the enemy will be Surprised on the first round of combat. You gain 1 Shadow point for endangering your friends.

Oathsworn

The enemy has something to do with your oath. Perhaps you *must* avoid them in order to fulfill your oath, or perhaps you *must* fight them. You gain 1 Shadow point and either gain Advantage on all ability checks made until the enemy is avoided (or combat begins) or you may elect to automatically fail your checks instead and force a confrontation.

Journey Event Table Entry 12 (or more)

Many Meetings? Fly you Fools!

The company has encountered a traveller upon the road, but all may not be as it at first appears. If the Company began the journey under *Dark Signs and Evil Portents*, it is a servant of the Enemy (perhaps a Ringwraith, a Child of Shelob or other major foes). If they started *From Auspicious Beginnings* then it is one of the great powers for good (a Wizard, Thranduil, Beorn or another of the Great and Good). Otherwise, the Look-out must make a **Wisdom** (**Perception**) check. If the hero succeeds by 5 or more, he recognises the traveller for someone of great standing and may immediately remove 1 Shadow point, gain +1 to their Arrival Roll and may seek an Audience with the traveller. On a basic success, the traveller's identity is shielded from them and the meeting should use the rules for *A Chance Encounter*. **Insight** checks may reveal their true identity. If the check fails, each hero must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** saving throw against Corruption or gain 2 Shadow points. They must then hide from the enemy (using the rules in *The Enemy is Abroad*) but also gain a level of Exhaustion and -1 penalty to their Arrival Roll. If the Look-out fails by 5 or more then the Company is automatically spotted and they must fleet. Each hero gains 2 Shadow points, a level of Exhaustion and a -1 to the Arrival Roll.

Changeling

Why do they pretend not to know me? You see through the guise of the traveller and know them for who they really are, for they are from your previous life. But they do not acknowledge you at all, and pretend not to know you... If you serve as Look-out, you may spend Inspiration to automatically succeed on your **Perception** check, as if you had rolled exactly what was needed. But the visitor's rejection of you weighs heavily and you gain a point of Shadow.

Fallen Scion

Whoever you face is someone that has great power over your lost destiny. For example, the long memory of Legolas might aid in proving your claim or the Messenger of Mordor may bear your family's ancient signet ring as a trophy of a past victory. If you pass the **Perception** check, you may spend Inspiration in order to see the traveller for who they truly are. Or, if you failed the check, you may gain 1 Shadow point and force a confrontation with the enemy.

Lure of the Road

The Road knows your name. And it is calling to you – there is no point in idle chatter with strangers! You may spend Inspiration in order to succeed on your **Perception** check, as if you had rolled exactly what was needed. But if the Company spends time with the travellers trying to determine their true identity, you gain a point of Shadow as you inwardly fume about the delay.

Reluctant Adventurer

Ever since you left home, you have seen amazing sights and met strange folk – no one at home would believe your stories! As the travellers approach, you're lost in your daydreams... You may choose to take Disadvantage on your **Perception** check. If you do, any success is counted as if you succeeded by 5 or more.

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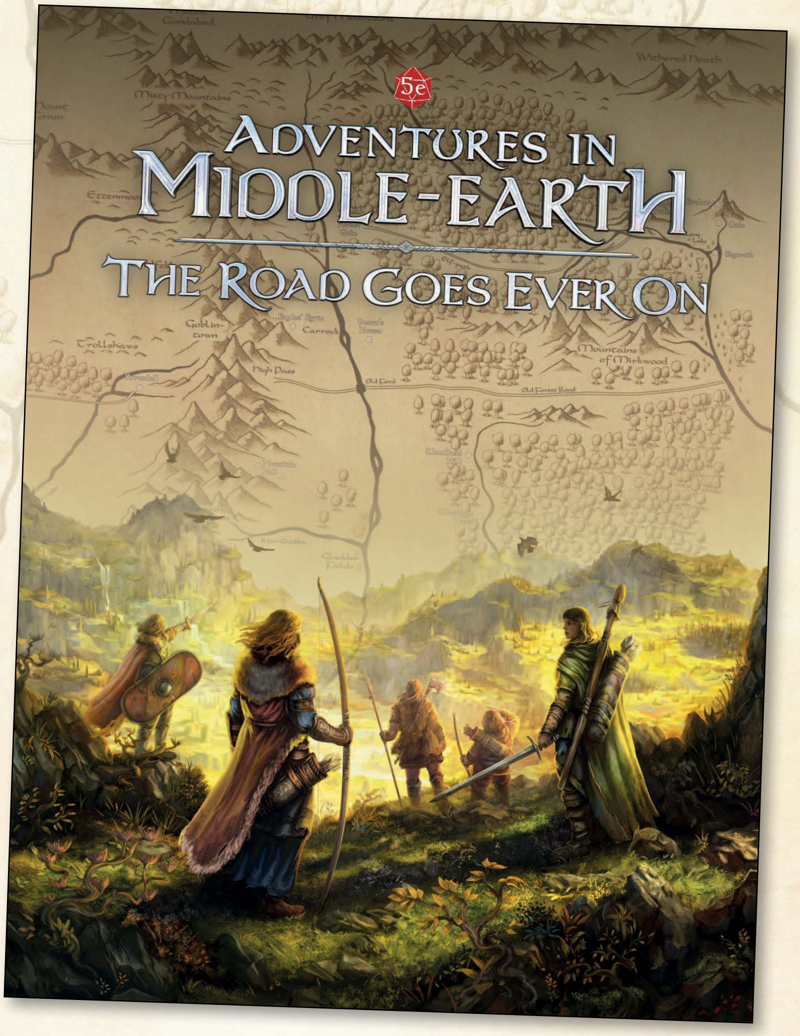

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